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WITH A WILD CRY JOANNA SPRANG FORWARD, FOR THE MAN SHE LOVED WAS IN IMMINENT DANGER.

## JULIET THE HEIRESS.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

##### A MAD PROJECT.

JOANNA VERREKER stood by the window of a London drawing-room, watching the raindrops splash, and pedestrians hurry past under their soaking umbrellas.

She was in a discontented state of mind.

She hated bad weather which kept her a prisoner to the house.

She hated poverty, which kept her from all the delights of life.

She hated her cousin's beauty, because it diminished her own more moderate attractions, and she hated dulness, from which she was suffering acutely at the present moment.

The door opened, and a footman came in who placed a letter on a delicately carved writing-table, and went out again.

Joanna moved forward and inspected the letter.

It was addressed to Miss Verreker in rather an untidy feminine hand, which was not familiar to her.

She turned the envelope over, and was struck by the coronet on the flap, as well as by the unprotected state of the contents, for the flap was not stuck down.

"From Lady Winstanley, I declare!" she exclaimed in surprise. "The Countess turned up at last! I wonder what she wants with Juliet. She has never written to her before. But she doesn't know anyone else so very aristocratic, and besides, the postmark is York, and I know that Wind Grove is somewhere in that direction. Juliet would read it to me if she were here, I've a great mind to see what Lady Winstanley says. It seems as if it were left open on purpose. She told me that I might always look to see if it were worth sending on."

The temptation grew upon her till she could resist it no longer. The note ran thus,—

"Wind Grove Abbey,

"Near York, Yorkshire.

"DEAR CHILD,—Will you forgive the forgetfulness of many years, and come to make friends

with us in our northern home? I have heard much of you as one of the stars of society, and I really think you ought to shed a little light upon your own kith and kin. Will you come to us on Saturday next? I fix that day because I hope my eldest boy, Windgrove, will be able to escort you by the midday express. If you do not see him, come on with your maid, and we shall be sure to meet you at Richmond. Don't refuse.

"Your affectionate Aunt,  
"CONSTANCE WINSTANLEY."

Joanna folded up the note and replaced it carefully in the envelope. Then she sat down by the window to think.

Juliet was not coming home till Monday unless she hastened her movements on account of this invitation, but anyhow she was sure to accept it.

She had always hankered after her mother's relations, and grieved because they seemed to have forgotten her.

She would go off with a cargo of new dresses, and everyone would admire her, and make much of her, and flatter her up to the skies.

Whatever she did was sure to be right, because she was an heiress as well as a beauty.

Happy Juliet! Would she have been such a favourite if she had been poverty-stricken like her cousin Joanna?

Why should all the luck be on Juliet's side, and not a single stroke come in her way? It was cruel and unjust.

Then she began to wonder what they would think of her if she took her cousin's place and went down to Yorkshire.

If they thought that she was rich, and heard that she had been much admired in London, they would be sure to find her wondrously pretty, and what a joke it would be, and how easy to carry it out!

The idea grew upon her, as fraudulent ideas so often do, if they are encouraged, and she sat there for ever so long, fancying herself an honoured guest at Wind Grove, with the eldest son desperately devoted to her, the Countess treating her already as a daughter, and all the other guests looking upon her as a person of importance.

What a new phase of life it would be to her, and how gloriously she would enjoy it.

She thought of it, and thought of it, till at last she sprang from her seat, slipped the letter into her pocket, and ran downstairs to a back-room on the ground-floor, where a gentle old lady was quietly studying the *Times*.

They called her "Aunt Pattie," but she was really no relation to either of the girls, only an impecunious, homeless waif, whom the heiress had taken under her roof out of charity, and kept out of love.

Mrs. Campbell chaperoned the two girls whenever she was wanted, and she ruled the house with a gentle sway when its young mistress was absent.

She was a lady by birth as well as breeding, and though naturally gentle and retiring, could assume a quiet dignity which repelled all imperitance.

She looked up in surprise as Joanna came so impetuously into the room.

"Auntie, I am going to ask a great favour," and the girl threw herself on her knees beside the old lady, and playfully put her hands over the paper to stop her reading, "I am going to stay with some people in the north, and I must have some new dresses in a great hurry. May I have twenty pounds? I don't think I could do with less, for it's a long journey, and a grand house, and I must look nice, you know."

"I can't do it," Mrs. Campbell said, gently, but decidedly, "the money is Juliet's—not my own."

"Oh, but you must, really. I know Juliet wouldn't mind. She would give me fifty if I asked for it, and you see I can't wait a moment—the dresses and things must be ordered at once," she persisted in her remonstrances, and grew very angry; but Mrs. Campbell would not give way.

"It would not be honest to lend Juliet's money right and left, as if it were my own. But you can telegraph to her, and if she consents, the money shall be handed over to you at once," she said, with a pleasant smile.

Joanna had to be contented with this concession, so she wrote the telegram and sent it off to the post. As soon as it was gone she began planning her dresses. There was so little time and cash was equally short, so she must be as sparing as she could. A black serge with zouave jacket, and two coloured blouses—one smart and the other simple. A cashmere for Sundays trimmed with black velvet; a black evening dress, and a white one, very smart; those would do with some she already possessed, and, of course, a large hat, and a tea-gown—or, perhaps, she could renovate an old one. The answer to the telegram came promptly.

"With the greatest pleasure. Where are you going? Dying of curiosity."

In a flutter of excitement Joanna started for the North on the appointed Saturday. But she saw no one whom she could identify as the Viscount at King's Cross. She had left no address behind her, for although she was resolved

to confess her escapade on her return, she did not wish it to be found out during her absence. The journey was uneventful, and she was so fully occupied with her thoughts that she scarcely gave any attention to her fellow-passengers. She felt very nervous as she stepped into the handsome carriage with the pair of black thoroughbreds which had come to meet her, and when they drew up at the doors of an immense pile of buildings, which she supposed to be Wind Grove, she was so appalled by its grandeur, and the glimpse she caught of the spacious hall, and the crowd of liveried servants, that she scarcely dared to get out.

But the effort had to be made, and she was ushered through that wide hall by a solemn functionary, who threw open a pair of folding doors, and announced "Miss Verreker," in sonorous tones.

The next moment she was embraced by an aristocratic-looking lady with fair hair rolled back from a broad forehead over a cushion, who was evidently the Countess.

She felt quite bewildered as she sat down in the chair that was offered her, and knew that all eyes were upon her. Feeling that all the criticisms were probably disparaging, she raised her head defiantly, and talked fast to show that she was quite at her ease.

"So you haven't brought Windgrove with you," Lady Winstanley said regretfully, for she had made up her mind that her son should marry the heiress, and it was too bad of him to waste this first-rate opportunity.

Presently Miss Verreker was shown to her room, as it was already time to dress for the eight o'clock dinner.

"Your maid will have unpacked for you," Lady Winstanley said, encouragingly, "so there is no occasion for a wild hurry; but my husband likes strict punctuality."

"I haven't brought a maid," Joanna answered, with a painful blush. "She was away from home, and I would not wait for her."

"Dear me, how very awkward for you! I wonder if one of the housemaids could be of any use," her hostess rejoined immediately, for she thought a maid a perfect necessity.

Joanna, who only shared Juliet's on occasions, thought it expedient to seem as if she could not do without one, so gratefully accepted the Countess's offer, and for the rest of the time that she spent at Wind Grove, she was saddled with a red-cheeked, awkward damsel, for her maid, who looked as if she came under protest, and always made a point of casting a contemptuous glance at every article of poor Joanna's toilette.

Downstairs her appearance had been mercilessly canvassed as soon as her back was turned. The men had come in from the smoking-room on purpose to see the London beauty, and they were most of them terribly disappointed. One after another they laughed at her flaming hair, bony figure, and straight mouth. As a matter of fact Joanna was rather nice-looking, her straight mouth could look very sweet when she smiled, her hair was auburn, not carrots, and her figure, though too slight, was tall and willowy; but these people had expected perfect beauty, and they were indignant at having been deceived.

"I think Miss Verreker rather charming," Gerald Graham said slowly, with his serious eyes fixed on the fire. "An artist would rave about the colour of her hair, and her manner is so awfully natural."

"If by 'natural' you mean *gauche*, I quite agree with you," Lady Rose Graham, the Countess's only daughter, said with a little laugh. "Mother will be in an awful state, for Windgrove will never go in for her."

"So much the better for us," rejoined her cousin placidly. "An heiress with hair like a sunset—you don't meet with such a prodigy every day of your life!"

"I hope Miss Verreker's fortune won't disappear so soon as a sunset," remarked Lord Cleveden, pulling his moustaches.

"I don't think so, for Sir Godwin Verreker inherited half a million just before his death. But we shall all be late for dinner," Lady Rose said as she moved towards the door.

"Is this young lady the daughter of Godwin

Verreker?" a white-haired General asked with some interest.

Lady Rose said she was, with the greatest confidence.

"Bless my soul! her father was in the same regiment as I was. The best friend I ever had. I don't understand his daughter having such fiery hair. I saw his little girl at his funeral, but no doubt that was another sister."

"Miss Verreker has no sister—only a cousin who lives with her. My aunt would not ask them both down here for fear lest Windgrove should fall in love with the wrong one," and Gerald laughed, as he followed the General into the hall.

## CHAPTER II.

### MAKING MUCH OF THE HEIRESS.

"MISS VERREKER will you come and have a game of golf?" Gerald Graham asked the next afternoon.

"Tennis, Miss Verreker—you would infinitely prefer tennis, wouldn't you?" Lord Cleveden suggested, as he fixed his eye-glass in his eye. "And I should only be too proud to undertake you."

"What do you say to croquet?" General Grey said with a smile. "Less fatiguing, and all in the shade of the cedars."

It was something quite delightful for Joanna to feel herself an object of so much attention; and after a moment's consideration she chose golf. She thought it the right thing just then, and Mr. Graham, who seemed so good-natured, would be sure not to mind teaching her. She confided to him as they went off in a party to the links that she really knew nothing about it.

But he said that he would put her up to everything, and she would be sure to get along all right. He was good-looking and very pleasant, with a pair of lazy-blue eyes, which rested very appreciatively now and then on Joanna's slight form. He rarely cared to exert himself overmuch, but he liked to see someone else looking alert and active.

Joanna, on the other hand, was glad to talk to him, because he never asked her inconvenient questions, like the General, who claimed her as the daughter of his old brother-officer, Sir Godwin, and wanted to know all sorts of details about his last end, which she was quite unable to furnish. She grew so confused about it, that he looked at her in surprise, and she avoided him as much as she could ever afterwards.

"Graham's making all the running," Lord Cleveden said in an aside to Lady Rose, as he was waiting for his turn to come round.

"Don't you think it is because no one else really cares to cut him out?" she said quietly, as she stooped to pick a piece of heather. "You are all so disappointed in the beauty!"

"Yes, but she's quite good-looking enough for an heiress. There's Fitzroy," looking across at rather a fast-looking man, with a hook nose, black moustaches, and lines marked deep by dissipation round his large black eyes, "would give his eyes to have her. He already hates Graham as he would a killer of foxes. We shall have a row soon."

"How very amusing!" exclaimed Lady Rose, with a twinkle in her eye. "You must keep me posted up as to everything that is going on."

"Fortunately for Graham the heiress's education seems to have been much neglected, and she has engaged him as amateur tutor."

"But I thought she was very clever, and went in for Cambridge examinations and all that sort of thing," Lady Rose said, looking puzzled.

"Good Heavens! What an awful girl! No wonder I shied at her."

"But what is Gerald to teach her—trigonometry, metaphysics or astronomy?"

"No; something more on our own level," he answered with a laugh—"golf at the present moment—billiards this evening. Your turn, Lady Rose," watching her anxiously as she raised her driver.

"Splendid!" as the ball after a series of wild bounds alighted close to the third hole. "I really couldn't have done it better myself."



"Is that high flattery!" she asked with an amused smile.

Major Fitzroy was only looking on, while Mr. Graham and Miss Verreker were playing against Lord Clevedon and Lady Rose; but he was constantly interfering in his pressing anxiety to be of service to the heiress, and Gerald Graham, though too much of a man of the world to show his temper, felt often as if he would like (in his own words) to "punch his head."

The victory remained with Mr. Graham, in spite of his partner's want of skill, and the whole party returned in time for a rather late tea on the lawn. Lady Winstanley turned to Joanna.

"You have a cousin living with you, haven't you?" she asked her abruptly. "What is her name?"

Like a crimson wave the colour rushed into Joanna's face, but the General was the only one who noticed it. She dropped a piece of cake, and as she stooped to pick it up, and throw it to Bruno, the great brown retriever, she said, hurriedly.

"We are both J's—Juliet and Joanna," and congratulated herself on having got out of the difficulty.

"And Joanna—what is she like?" pursued the Countess, who seemed to be fascinated by the topic, and of course took it for granted that the cousin left in London was "Joanna."

"Just like me," she replied with great veracity. "What sort of colouring?" inquired Lady Rose.

"Unkind people call it red, others auburn," was the glib answer, and then, to her great relief, Gerald Graham asked her if she were ready for her lesson in billiards.

Major Fitzroy exclaimed that it was his turn now to play with Miss Verreker, as she had been Graham's partner at golf.

"All right," said Gerald, carelessly. "I will coach Miss Verreker, and you shall try your skill against us," and the three walked off together, Joanna in high glee, for she knew she had carried off the two best-looking men of the party.

"What lies people tell," Lady Rose exclaimed, impatiently. "Don't you remember, mother, how everyone told us, without exception, that Miss Verreker was the belle of last season, and raved about her gold-brown hair and ivory skin?"

"Reports always exaggerate, and Juliet has a very good complexion," Lady Winstanley said, reflectively. "You see we were out of England, so they knew that we couldn't contradict them."

"So they thought they could cram us with anything. It is too bad. Think of the ball next week. Everyone will be expecting a beautiful vision, and they will laugh in our faces when they see an ordinary looking girl like Juliet."

"Not if you let out that she will be enormously rich," murmured the Viscount.

"I thought you professed not to care for money," Lady Rose said quickly.

"I said I could never marry for money," he answered with decision. "Any amount of shekels would not make up to me for a bad temper, or a nagging tongue."

"But you would never know. A girl might be all sweetness outside, but as sour as a crab-apple inside."

"I should watch to see if she snapped when a woman trod on her dress, or if she continued an argument when everyone else wanted to drop it. There are certain signs which can't escape me."

"What do you think of my cousin—tell me frankly?"

"She has a temper."

"And she changes colour very rapidly," the General added, as if speaking his thoughts aloud.

"What do you gather from that?" Lady Rose asked curiously.

"Well, I can scarcely say," stroking his white beard, reflectively. "It might come from physical causes, such as bad circulation or a weak heart."

"And what is the other alternative?" asked the Countess, looking amused.

"In this case there is no other alternative. But if I had met Miss Verreker casually in London society, which is so very mixed just now, and I saw her blush every time either

home or kindred were mentioned; I should take her for a piratical craft sailing under false colours."

"But as she is my niece," rejoined Lady Winstanley, drawing herself up, "the notion is perfectly absurd."

"I quite agree with you," the General replied, with a bow. "I said there was no other alternative."

"Poor Juliet," laughed Lady Rose, "if she has a weak heart Major Fitzroy ought not to attack it so fiercely. Come and see how they are getting on."

The whole party, except the Countess and one or two others, moved off to the billiard-room where they found Gerald Graham most diligently instructing Miss Verreker as to every move of the game, whilst Major Fitzroy was looking unusually sulky.

Joanna was having what she inwardly called "a very good time," playing the two men off against each other, whilst pretending to be engrossed with the game, and she was not at all pleased with the sudden incursion of so many lookers-on. They made her so nervous that she missed an easy cannon and Major Fitzroy, after a long break, won the game with a brilliant stroke.

"I am so angry with you for beating me," Joanna said, with a bright look into his triumphant face.

"I would rather have lost," he said, in a low voice. "Give me the first dance to-night as a consolation."

"I don't see that you need any consolation," she answered, quickly, resolved not to commit herself too far with only an undistinguished soldier.

"No, indeed," said Gerald Graham. "Who will console me for leading you on to defeat? Will you be very good to me to-night? We are to dance in the music-room, and I shall want any amount of waltzes."

"Any amount?" and she raised her eyebrows in what she considered a properly indifferent style, whilst her foolish heart swelled with satisfied vanity. "That sounds rather a large order."

"Coaches always demand an exorbitant salary," he said, referring to the lessons he had given her in golf as well as in billiards.

"But do they get it?" she asked, with a smile.

"Always," he asserted, confidently.

"Then you must be the first exception," and she laughed, enjoying the fun.

"Gerald, shall we have a game of a hundred?" Lady Rose asked, determined to interrupt Joanna's flirtation with her cousin.

He pulled out his watch.

"Afraid I haven't time. Should like it awfully," he said, and hurried from the room.

"Gerald is the most unselfish fellow under the sun," Lady Rose said, as she and Joanna were going upstairs to dress for dinner later on. "He went off just now to sit for half-an-hour with Charlie Bennett, our head-keeper's son. The boy broke his leg through tumbling into a saw-pit, and has been laid up for ever so long."

"How good of Mr. Graham," Joanna said, cordially, for she liked him very much. "I always feel as if I could be unselfish if everything went well with me."

"I should have thought that everything went well with an heiress."

"I really don't know; I can only judge by myself. My life down here is a fairy tale, but when I go back—" she stopped abruptly, and pulled herself up, afraid of having let out too much.

"When you go back you will find yourself in London which has apparently appreciated you so much," Lady Rose went on with unconscious sarcasm.

"Yes; but there's nothing like the charm of the country," Joanna said, with feigned enthusiasm.

"I should have thought the Row or the opera would have had superior attractions for you."

"Ah, but one gets so tired of the same thing day after day," she answered, with the true air

of *blasé* dissipation, as she reached her own door.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE REAL JULIET AT HOME.

"So kind of you to receive me like this with open arms," Lord Windgrove said, as he sat down on a very low chair close to Juliet Verreker's, and fixed his dark eyes on her face with evident appreciation of its many charms.

"Please don't take away my character before Aunt Pattie. It sounds quite improper," she said, with a low sweet laugh. "She will give me a terrible lecture so soon as your back is turned, Lord Windgrove."

"Lord Windgrove, indeed! as if we were strangers. Have you forgotten we are first cousins?"

"Yes; I've had eighteen years to forget it in," she said, with a sudden gravity.

"Now, that is too bad. Remember that when you came into the world, and for many years afterwards, we were all out in India. When the Governor's time was up I went to Eton and Oxford, and since then I've been round the world, and, 'pon my word, I don't seem to have had a moment to look up friends or relations in."

"If you have let them all slip, London must seem like a howling wilderness," she said demurely.

"No, because they are all there, and I've come back to them. Like I've come back to you; don't you know?" he said, innocently.

"You haven't come back, because you never were here before."

"You are hard on a fellow. Please treat me like a stranger. You can't abuse me then."

"Very well, Lord Windgrove," she said, solemnly, but with a twinkle in her eye. "May I trouble you to ring the bell for tea?"

He jumped up—found the bell—rang a peal and then turned to Mrs. Campbell, who was sitting in her favourite armchair knitting something white and soft.

"What can I do to soften her heart?" he asked in an injured tone. "It is harder than a cannon ball."

"Harden your own, that is the only way," replied the old lady with her gentle smile.

"Impossible in face of such attractions! But seriously, I can't understand the situation at all," he said as he sat down again. "My mother told me distinctly that she had written to ask you to come to Yorkshire, and I was to bring you down."

"I never got the letter," Juliet said gravely, for she had always felt sore at the apparently heartless neglect of her dead mother's only sister.

"And I forgot all about it. Not having seen you. I had no idea what I was missing. But now that I've found you out, I'm not going to lose sight of you again. Won't you come down with me next week? They are going to have some festivities, and I shall have to cut the whole concern if you are not there."

"I certainly cannot go without an invitation."

"But you have had one, I declare."

"And my cousin is away, and I don't like leaving Aunt Pattie quite alone."

"Call the cousin back."

"I don't know where she is. It's the funniest thing, nobody can tell me where she is, and she left no address. Simmonds says she went to Yorkshire."

"Perhaps we shall come across her. Anyhow, if my mother writes, you won't be so hard-hearted as to refuse; will you? Mrs. Campbell will spare you, I'm sure," with a glance of entreaty to which she replied immediately that she would go away and hide herself, if Miss Verreker were going to deprive herself of a pleasant visit on her account.

"Then that is settled," rising from his seat. "I've a bothering appointment at my club, so I must be off; but you will be in the Row later on?"

"Not to-day, we are going to Hampstead to take some flowers to a poor invalid."

"Let me order some in Piccadilly," eagerly.

"A thing sent instead of taken loses half its value. Mrs. Maynard is very fond of me."

"Not half so fond as I am. A first cousin and all that sort of thing," he said, audaciously.

"A first cousin, a perfect stranger till we met at the Whittaker's just four days ago!" she said scornfully.

"Yes, but with one leap we jumped into something more than friendship."

"I gave up jumping when I turned up my hair," composedly.

"What an awfully provoking mood you are in," looking down at her beautiful, unruffled face, which seemed to him the prettiest in the world just then.

"No, I am provoked, and you are provoking. What do you talk of friendship for when we are almost strangers?"

"I won't offend again," he said, in a low voice. "Friendship is much too cold a thing for you and me. Good-bye," he pressed her small hand significantly, took a courteous leave of Mrs. Campbell, and left the room with a happy smile upon his handsome face, whilst Juliet bent her blushing cheeks over her work.

"I did not know that we were going to Hampstead to-day," Mrs. Campbell remarked, as she drank her tea.

"No more did I," and Juliet smiled, "until he asked me to meet him in the Row. Instead of making myself too cheap, we will make Mrs. Maynard happy."

Juliet was never quite satisfied unless she had done something for the benefit of one of her fellow-creatures during the day.

She had always some work of charity on hand, but when she went about in society her face was generally the brightest in any crowded assembly. She could talk nonsense and enjoy herself thoroughly.

She danced delightfully, and skated gracefully; hunted fearlessly, and played golf with skill as well as enthusiasm; but in all her prosperity she never forgot that whilst she lived in the sunshine, there were thousands of others who pined in the shade.

Her accidental meeting with Lord Windgrove on the very evening of the day on which she returned to town would have struck terror to Joanna's heart, if she had only known of it; but as the days passed on and discovery became more improbable, she had really almost forgotten that she was there under false pretences.

The more she saw of Gerald Graham the more she liked him; and he certainly singled her out for an extra amount of attention, whilst Major Fitzroy seemed to be perfectly devoted.

He thought that marriage with an heiress would be a capital way of mending his broken fortunes, so he made love as fast as he could, and Joanna, who enjoyed his devotion, gave him more encouragement than she really was aware of.

Lady Rose watched her in surprise, for she thought that she behaved more like an inexperienced school-girl than one who had seen a good deal of the world; but she did not consider that it was her business to interfere, and, besides, she was very much interested in her own affairs at the moment.

For some time she had liked Lord Cleveden better than any other of the men who hovered about her, but she was not at all sure if he regarded her as anything more than a pleasant friend.

This is always a harassing doubt to the feminine mind, and it often prevented her from having a good night's rest.

The whole party went to church on a glorious summer's morning, and Joanna, looking unusually well in her pretty grey dress, started in the highest spirits with an admirer on each side. The Major had received a ferocious letter from one of his creditors, and he was resolved to propose if he could before that day was over. He insisted upon carrying Miss Verreker's small Prayer-book, and still more tiny Hymn-book; and as he dropped behind because of the narrowness of the path, he looked inside to see what entry there was on each fly-leaf. He was surprised to see in the first,—

"Joanna Meredith Verreker,  
200, Park Lane."

and the very same words in the second.

"You have stolen your cousin's books," he said to her, as he walked close behind.

"No, indeed I haven't," she called out, quite thrown off her guard. "She gave them to me herself."

"Then why did she put her own name in them, and not yours?" he asked, as he thrust them over her shoulder.

"But she didn't. She wouldn't be so absurd," she insisted, annoyed at what she considered his obstinacy.

Gerald Graham, who was a little in front, turned round at the sound of her voice, afraid that the Major was being impertinent.

"Only look and see," Major Fitzroy cried, triumphantly. "Absurd or not, there it is."

Joanna gave one glance, and grew crimson, as she suddenly recollected. She pushed them away angrily.

"Joanna had some exactly like those—I—I—must have caught them up."

"Then they are your cousin's? I knew they were," he said, pleased, as some small-minded men are at being right about a trifle.

"They are Joanna's," she said, unsteadily, and at the same moment, she met Gerald's grave eyes fixed upon her with a strange expression in them.

"What a fuss you are making about a trifle," he exclaimed, coming, as usual, to her rescue. "I often go about with my brother's hat instead of my own, and swear it is mine till I see 'C. G.' in it, instead of 'G. G.' It is a most natural mistake."

Joanna's peace was destroyed for that morning. When she knelt in church she felt a horrible hypocrite, and she almost made up her mind to go home the next day, and to confess all to Juliet before she was found out. But not quite. Gerald Graham placed himself determinedly by her side as they came out, and talked to her in a most confidential way about his own life.

As they lingered behind the others, Joanna began to feel quite happy again. Her heart grew soft at the mere sound of his pleasant voice, and she felt an unusual shyness whenever she met his eyes.

"I had a friend once, whom I loved far better than Charlie. He was the pleasantest fellow possible—never grumbled at anything—always ready to do anything for you. I never met anyone like him," he added, with a sigh, "and I shall never have such a friend again."

"Is he dead?" Joanna asked softly, feeling very sympathetic.

His next words stung her like a wasp.

"Dead to me. He deceived me—and I never spoke to him afterwards. Deceit is a thing I can't get over. I'd forgive almost anything if a fellow came frankly to me and confessed that he had done it. I hate being duped," and he cut angrily at a thistle with his cane, as if he were striking a liar across the face.

Oh, the burning sense of shame that covered her from head to foot! Unable to say a word, half-choked by her feelings, she walked on in silence. What would he say to her? What would he think of her if he only knew!—Would he laugh at it as a joke—a girlish bit of fun? Or would he turn his back on her after one glance of disgusted contempt, and leave her to sink away in her misery?

"I am afraid I have bored you horribly," he said apologetically. "Why should it interest you to know how I quarrelled with a friend who cheated me?"

"But it did interest me," she said hurriedly, her face turned away from him. "But you ought to forgive him if he is sorry."

"Let him say that he is sorry, and I will forgive him at once—but he won't be my chum again—nothing can make him that."

"Oh, you are too hard," she exclaimed, excitedly. "Perhaps he meant no harm."

"Perhaps not; but I was utterly mistaken in his character, and I shall never make the same mistake again."

"Oh, you are cruel—cruel! If my dearest

friend cast me off just for one fault it would break my heart."

"But you would never deceive anyone;" with his kindest smile, as he metaphorically drove a dagger into her heart. "What I've especially admired in you was your frankness. You are not made up of so many shams and deceptions as some of the girls of the day, your eyes are so honest and true."

Joanna answered nothing, but it seemed as if a heavy stone were laid upon her heart.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"WE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH TO-MORROW."

"I HAVE had a telegram from Windgrove," Lady Winstanley explained as she came into Lady Rose's den with a bewildered expression on her face. "What the boy means I can't conceive. Just listen, I'll come, if I may bring Juliet Verreker—lovely beyond words. Wire at once."

"I see what it is," exclaimed her daughter; "he has met the penniless Joanna, and taken her for her cousin. Just like Windgrove!"

"I don't see how he could, because the difference of Christian names would show at once."

"But he calls her Juliet."

"So he does. Perhaps he wrote the wrong name by mistake!"

"It is very odd," said Lady Rose, musingly. "We were told that the one Miss Verreker was just like the other; so she can't be lovely, or else it would be so delightful to have her down for the ball."

"I am afraid we must have her," rejoined her mother with a doubtful sigh. "You know what the boy is. If he's in love with her he won't come without her, and then the ball will be spoilt. But you see there is no time to write, and if she's rather down in the world I should like to be especially polite."

"I'll write such a courteous telegram to Miss Verreker that she won't be able to say 'No,' and I'll send a wire to Windgrove to say what we've done," Lady Rose said, and she rose quickly and went to the writing-table.

"Thanks, dear. I haven't a moment, but I suppose I must break the news to Juliet. I hope she won't disapprove," moving towards the door.

"Not a word—"

"But, my love!" in surprise, "it would seem so strange."

"We don't know if she will come or not. Let us keep it till the very last, and then tell it as a pleasant surprise. And now, if we are really going into York by the twelve o'clock train, we ought to start. Oh, General Grey!"—as the soldier's grey head was put in at the door—"we've had such an astounding telegram from my brother."

"How very extraordinary," he exclaimed, as Lady Rose put it into his hand. "I would give five pounds to see this young lady, I would indeed; I feel so puzzled."

"We've asked her to come, and I wrote the telegram," she said, laughingly, "so that you ought to hand me over the amount. But it's a dead secret; you mustn't breathe a word."

"Does Miss Verreker know?"

"Not she. But mother thinks we ought to tell her."

"Not for the world, Lady Rose! I asked her yesterday how many years it was since her father died! 'Ten years,' she said distinctly. But when I exclaimed in surprise that I had seen Sir Godwin only five years ago at the Horse Guards, she said 'Yes, that was just one year before his death.' And then she suddenly became crimson, and walked quickly out of the room to fetch her handkerchief, which, I believe, was in her pocket all the while. It's queer, isn't it?"

"I believe she is an impostor," cried Lady Rose, opening wide her eyes. "We ought to send for a policeman! I'm going into York with my mother. Can I do anything?"

"No; you leave her to me," replied the General with a smile, as she ran out of the room after a horrified glance at the clock.

Joanna was terrified at the mischievous gleam in his eyes as he sat opposite to her at luncheon.



He set many traps for her in the course of conversation, but she was completely on the alert. And, in order to baffle him, pretended to be engrossed with the Major, who sat by her side.

"You are not fond of jewels, I perceive!" the General said quite casually, as they strolled out on to the terrace, as soon as luncheon was over.

"Indeed I am. Why should you think I am different to other women?"

"Because you never wear any," he said quietly, like a cunning detective.

She was on her guard at once, and said, with apparent frankness,—

"My unfortunate hair is so bright that I want toning down rather than not."

"But you will favour us with the celebrated Verreker diamonds to-morrow night at the ball?" he persisted.

"I didn't bring them with me."

"My dear Miss Verreker, why didn't you?" looking her straight in the face in a way that made her very uncomfortable.

"I wouldn't have brought them for anything," she answered almost defiantly, "when I had no maid to take care of them."

"Quite right," said Gerald, approvingly; "you might have been robbed and murdered on the way."

"And then only think what we should have missed!" cried the Major, with an ardent glance.

"And I am sure you need no jewels, you can do so well without them," Gerald said in a low voice, that made her heart flutter.

She walked slowly down the marble steps, and to her great delight she heard his footsteps behind her.

Poor Joanna, she had entered on her mad project in a simple spirit of adventure. She thought she would have her own bit of fun out of life for once—she would feel the delight of being treated as somebody of importance, she would have the attention of the best men, and would be treated as an honoured guest. And after all this she thought she could go back to her old life of poverty and insignificance, and be just the same girl as she was before; but she forgot that she had such a thing as a heart, and that she might lose it to one of those men who devoted themselves to the heiress—lose it as she had lost it already to Gerald Graham—Lady Winstanley's own nephew.

"I must be going home directly," she said, thoughtfully, as he walked by her side. "I only meant to stay for a week."

"I don't see any need for hurry. Aren't you happy here?" he asked with one of his most winning smiles.

"Happy! Yes, indeed; more than happy," looking round at him with shining eyes. "But the happiest visit must come to an end."

"I don't see the necessity. We shall miss you horribly."

"I don't think you will ever think of me again," in a low voice.

"I shall think of nothing else," earnestly. "Oh! Juliet, darling! I don't feel as if I could ever do without you," stopping still, and taking possession of both her hands.

"Don't—don't talk like that," shaking like a leaf in the wind. Oh! to have the cup of joy placed to her lips and then to be obliged to cast it to the ground.

"I know I have no right to," he said, humbly. "You are rich and I am poor, not a beggar exactly, but still with no money for luxuries such as you are accustomed to."

"Don't; I hate money. Oh! Mr. Graham, if you only knew," and she bit her lip, on the point of bursting into tears.

"Do you mean that you could care for me?" he asked in glad surprise. "Answer me frankly, dearest, do you love me? Yes or No?"

She looked into his eyes, and he read his answer in her's. The next moment he stooped and kissed her burning lips. She let them touch his, she let him draw her towards him till she felt the quick throbbing of his heart as clearly as her own.

For one wild moment she felt that she was his for ever and ever. And she hid her face on his breast. And then the reaction came. He

loved her, and just because he loved her she must send him away for ever!

She raised her head and looked into his face which was only a few inches from her own. How handsome he was, with such frank fearless eyes, and such a kindly mouth. She would never meet his like again.

"Let me go," she gasped. "I cannot marry you. Indeed I can't."

He let her go.

"Ah, I knew I was no match for the heiress," he said very slowly, with a sad sort of dignity in his expression.

"It is not that," wringing her hands. "But, oh, you would not want me if you only knew."

"What is it?" looking at her very earnestly. "Are you engaged?"

"No—not that," turning away her head.

"Not secretly married? No—you would not condescend to act a living lie! Juliet, tell me for Heaven's sake!" going a step nearer, "I am not good enough for you I know."

"If I had to choose from all the world, I would choose you," she said with such a glow of enthusiasm on her face as made her look almost beautiful.

"Then I declare I won't give you up," and he opened his arms with a triumphant smile.

But she held up her hand to check him, putting on as much sternness as she could assume, for this continual resistance was trying all her strength.

"You have no choice, no more have I," she said very sadly. "You will find somebody much more worthy of you."

She turned away quickly, for she was afraid of disgracing herself by crying like a child, but he called out after her, his love doubly quickened by difficulties, as is usually the case.

"I shall not take this as a last answer, so you needn't think it," he called after her.

"He will never—never ask me again!" she said to herself with a sob. "I am the most miserable of mortals. He will despise me—hate me. He will talk of me as he talks of that other friend who deceived him, and I shall never know another happy moment. I will go back to-morrow, I won't wait for this ball. I will telegraph to Juliet that I am coming, and I will confess everything the moment that I arrive."

She hurried on, not noticing where her steps were taking her, only intent on hiding her tear-stained face from every inquisitive eye.

Presently she stopped, and leaning over a low fence looked with dim eyes across the stretch of wooded, undulating ground, which composed the large estate which had been in the hands of the Grahams for centuries.

Without knowing it she was near the ninth hole on the links, and standing close by, though hidden by a clump of bushes, were General Grey and Lord Clevedon, waiting for their turn.

"I believe her to be a rank impostor," said the General, with decision, "and I mean to watch her like a detective."

"Great Scot! Do you think she is one of the swell mob?" exclaimed the Viscount in evident dismay. "Lady Winstanley had better look after her jewels."

"There is not enough splash about her for that. I should expect a woman of that sort to have every finger crammed with rings, and to have false diamonds sparkling all over her; but this so-called Miss Verreker wears but very little, and that little is first-rate; no flash jewels amongst them. However, we shall know the truth to-morrow!"

Joanna fled like a frightened rabbit down the path with a scared face and an indignant mind.

So this was the way they talked of her behind her back. She who thought herself so honoured spoken of as a rank impostor—one of the swell mob!

Oh, better, a thousand times her life in the insignificance of her former position, than suspected and misjudged by the malicious world.

And what did that wretched old General mean by that "we shall know the truth to-morrow?"

Perhaps they had sent up to Park-lane for explanations, and Juliet, never guessing that this strange Miss Verreker was Joanna, would

confirm their suspicions by denouncing her as an impudent fraud!

Oh, dear, kind Juliet, who had always been so good to her. She would forgive her everything, and she would be so grieved to do her harm!

If she could only see her, and ask her to say that it was a joke. It was too late to write, but at least she could telegraph. She hurried back to the house to ask for the nearest office.

## CHAPTER V.

### MAJOR FITZROY MAKES A PLUNGE.

It often happens that the thing you set your heart on doing it is impossible to carry out. One person after another prevented Joanna from sending off her telegram.

Major Fitzroy intercepted her, and positively insisted on her playing a game of tennis with him.

Before it was finished the Countess and Lady Rose returned from their expedition to York, and Joanna felt as if it would be discourteous to slip away directly they came back.

She had to listen whilst Lady Winstanley told about her adventures in the cathedral city. A cab-horse had run away with them, and nearly precipitated them out into the road in front of a heavy dray. She missed her purse, and accused a little boy of having stolen it. The boy was very indignant, and a policeman was just going to carry him off to the station, when a shopman arrived upon the scene with the purse in his hand, which he said had been left on his counter, &c.

Joanna listened with one ear, whilst her thoughts were straying in quite a different direction.

"We shall know the truth to-morrow." Those words rang in her other ear with an ominous ring, and her face was full of a strange anxiety which Lady Rose and the General were quick to notice, and set down to her consciousness of guilt.

At last she thought she could escape, and she got up with a careless air, but unfortunately for her purpose, she came upon Gerald Graham in the library where she went to find a telegraph-form.

"I want to send a telegram at once, how can I manage it?" she asked, in a business-like tone, not daring to look in his face.

"Is it very important?" he asked gravely. "We have no connection here between this house and the office, as there ought to be, and it is rather far to send so late."

"It is important," Joanna said quietly. "I should not like to arrive with no one to expect me."

Gerald started.

"You are not going away?"

She gave a little nod.

"I am driving you out of the house," he exclaimed, with the utmost bitterness.

"Indeed, you are not," earnestly.

"You can't go before the ball. What will my aunt say?"

"Say!" with a joyless laugh. "That she is thankful to be rid of me."

"Juliet, for my sake, stay!" his blue eyes fixed upon hers, as he took both her hands in his.

"I can't," leaning back against the book-case, looking white with agitation, as the face that she loved better than any other came nearer and nearer.

"You don't know—I can't stay—I am longing to go," she said breathlessly, with heaving chest.

"Then you don't care a hang for me," he exclaimed, with sudden sternness, "and when you told me that you loved me, you were mocking me. I could never have thought it of you."

"It was true," she said quickly, with a sudden flash in her eyes, for his words cut her to the quick. "True—true—to my eternal misery."

"I won't believe it unless you stay for this ball. If you cared for me the least little bit in the world, you would want to dance with me, you would be jealous of all the other girls."

"I am, I am!" she interrupted, blushing.

"Prove it by not deserting me," he said, firmly.

"Stay, and I'll believe you; go, and I shall know that you are utterly heartless—leading me on, only to laugh at me."

"Heartless!" she drew a deep breath, and looked straight into his handsome face. "I tell you that I can never marry you. Isn't it better that I should go away as soon as possible?"

He studied her face with the utmost interest, watched her quivering lips, her downcast eyes, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, and wondered.

"Just tell me this," he said suddenly. "Would you like to marry me—if you could?"

An enthusiastic smile irradiated her face, and woke it into positive beauty.

It was sufficient answer, and he exclaimed joyously,—

"Then I don't care. Whatever obstacle there is shall be moved away."

Stooping his head, he audaciously snatched a kiss, and blushing like a rose, Joanna tore her hands from his grasp, and fled from the room.

The gong had already rung, and she knew she was late, but she did not begin her toilette or ring her bell for the unsympathetic housemaid.

Pacing up and down the room in an agony of doubt, she felt an over-whelming pressure on her brain.

Should she risk everything, and tell Gerald Graham who she was, and why she had come?

"But oh, if he despised her, if he turned away from her in bitter contempt and loathing, if his love changed into scorn, how could she bear it and carry a calm demeanour before the world?"

Still, it must come sooner or later. Surely it would be better to tell it when she was there to soften it, to say that instead of a fraudulent imposture, it was only a girlish joke, a piece of childish folly, bitterly repented of long before the end.

There was a knock at the door, and Maria entered, saying,—

"I knew you were getting late, Miss, so I thought I had better come."

Poor Joanna had to alter her expression, as she scrambled into her pretty evening dress, scarcely knowing what she put on.

She felt that the General's eye was fixed upon her as she went into the drawing-room, but she drew up her neck proudly, and made her way to a vacant chair near a comparative stranger, who would not trouble her with awkward questions.

A knot of men gathered round the supposititious heiress, and she exerted herself to be bright and lively.

Gerald hovered on the skirts of the small crowd, but Major Fitzroy forced his way to the front, with a steady purpose in his heart.

His creditors were pressing him sorely, and he was determined to silence them at once by announcing that he was engaged to the rich Miss Verreker.

He could not make up his mind as to whether it were better to speak to her to-night, or whether he should wait for the ball.

As he was desperately afraid of Gerald Graham stepping in before him, he determined at last to seize the first opportunity that presented itself, without waiting for anything else.

"Have you heard?" General Grey inquired, in a low voice, as he stood by the side of Lady Rose.

"Yes, I had a telegram. They are both coming, and hope to arrive in time for dinner."

"You have not told her?" with a glance towards Joanna, as she sat like a queen surrounded by her court.

"No, we've thought it over carefully. We want to convict her, but not to have a public scandal. So our plan is to have the new Juliet Verreker shown into mother's boudoir directly she arrives, where we can be having tea together, you and I and Lord Clevedon, and mother, of course; not Gerald, I think, for he might make a fool of himself."

"Not Gerald, certainly," rejoined the General. "Decision. I am afraid this will be a heavy blow to him."

"Yes, he is quite devoted, absurd fellow!" she exclaimed impatiently.

"Not altogether absurd. She is really attractive, you know."

"I don't see it. But, dinner at last! I thought it was never coming!"

There was a general movement, and Joanna found herself walking into the dining-room on the arm of Gerald Graham.

Only one day more of happiness, and then she would go back to London and sink into her former insignificance. To-night she could have it all her own way, and it amused her intensely to see how jealous the Major was growing, as she allowed her attention to be entirely engrossed by Gerald Graham.

Every now and then she looked down to where the Earl was sitting with a bland smile on his usually imperturbable face. He had been very kind to her in his dignified way, and she wondered if he would exert himself to defend her if she had to confess everything before she went. She had come to a resolution which she resolved not to break, and that was to tell Gerald that she was "Joanna, the penniless," not "Juliet, the heiress," before they separated for the night.

"What were you thinking of?" he asked presently, as he saw a shadow cross her face.

"I am going to tell you a secret to-night," she said in a low voice.

"The secret that separates us?" he asked, eagerly. "Oh, do, for Heaven's sake. I believe it will shrivel into nothing, like a ghost in daylight!"

She shook her head sadly.

"No, it will leave a solid and unpleasant reality behind."

"Then keep it till to-morrow, and let us be happy whilst we can."

"No, to-night, or I shall not sleep a wink," she said, feverishly.

"So be it then," he answered, quietly; "just as you like, but don't look as if you were going to be hanged, or you'll make me horribly funny!"

Joanna pulled herself together, and began to laugh and chaff in an excited manner to cover her own trepidation.

Later in the evening, in the midst of the dancing, Major Fitzroy said,—

"Come into the conservatory." And, before she could utter a remonstrance, she found herself in a secluded corner with broad palm-leaves sheltering her from the public gaze, and long trails of yellow roses hanging over her head.

Fearful of an interruption, he began at once as soon as he was seated by her side on a low couch covered with a Turkish shawl.

"Juliet, you know how I love you. Tell me that you love me in return. You do, don't you, darling?" seizing her unwilling hand and trying to drag it to his lips.

"You are mistaken, Major Fitzroy," she said, scornfully, "you don't love me the least little bit. Please let go my hand."

"I swear I do!" vehemently, with fierce eyes fixed on her shrinking face. "It is my only hope in life to have you for my wife."

"That I can never be," she said, decidedly, trying to rise.

"You must!" he cried, more in dismay than thwarted love. "I cannot do without you; you've made me hope; you've led me on—"

"Stop, Major Fitzroy!" she said, coldly. "I have only let you go your own way. Don't say that I've led you on."

"But I do. You have led me on! Juliet, marry me—or I'll blow out my brains!" he cried distractedly, as he thought of his debts, and Miss Verreker's large fortune slipping from him.

"Listen. I am not the heiress that you think me!" She saw his chin drop, and nearly laughed aloud. "My fortune has been greatly exaggerated."

"You are deceiving me," he said, looking fixedly at her. "You are trying a new form of consolation for my fearful disappointment."

"I am telling you the truth, which will be published abroad in a few days," she answered, calmly, though her lips trembled.

"Honour bright!" he asked with the utmost solemnity, thinking what an escape he had had.

"Honour bright!" she returned quietly.

"And you won't have me?" he asked, with pretended dejection.

"You don't want me any longer. Tell the truth!" she answered, with a little laugh.

"I adore you; but I couldn't afford it, don't you see?" he answered, ruefully.

"No; and a large fortune to pay for us both would have been very convenient. Please take me back to the ballroom," haughtily.

He took her at once without remonstrance, and as he placed her on an ottoman, he bowed low, and hurried off, feeling very small, and in an execrable temper.

## CHAPTER VI.

### "SAVE HIM!"

JOANNA was surrounded by partners as soon as she reached the music-room, and she seemed to be dancing with great zest. But all the while her heart was as heavy as lead.

That confession, which had to be made to Gerald Graham, weighed on her heavily and oppressed her like a nightmare, and she wondered why he kept away from her so persistently.

There he stood in the doorway, watching her continually with his large blue eyes, but letting anyone else engage her for waltz or galop. If he did not mean to speak to her, why had he asked her to stay? Why had he lost all wish to hear the secret that he had entreated her so urgently to tell him?

Her uneasiness grew as the hours passed by. She had seen Lady Rose go up to him, and she had stayed by him for some time, talking very earnestly. His face had been clouded ever since, and he had never asked her once to dance after that conversation.

Oh, it was hateful to be suspected on one side and trusted on the other, and to know that she deserved neither as well as both; for she was not an ordinary impostor trying to delude some man of rank into a marriage which he would repent for ever afterwards; and yet she was very like an impostor, for she was pretending to be what she was not. She gave a heavy sigh, and a voice said close to her ear,—

"What is that sigh for? Come into the garden and have a chat."

She was engaged for all the next dances, but without a thought for those other luckless partners, she took Gerald's arm joyfully, and stepped out of the French window into the sweetness of the summer's night.

Silently he led her down the terrace past the lighted windows, into a part which was so shadowed by trees that the light could scarcely penetrate through the branches. Then he stopped, and taking the small hand which rested on his arm, clasped it in a firm grasp.

"Now," he said softly, "tell me all."

She drew a deep breath, and shivered from head to foot. The first words that she had to utter might deprive her for ever of his love; and yet she had asked for this opportunity, and she could never have a better. With none but the stars to listen or to look, and no contemptuous General Grey to interfere, she clung to him for a moment in helpless vacillation, but she told herself that she must brace herself for the worst, before she could ever know whether the rest of her life would be spent in the shadow of heart-breaking disappointment, or in the glad sunshine of happy love.

"All can be told in a few words," she said, falteringly, "I am not Juliet, but Joanna."

He started away from her in dismay, dropping her hand in his horrified surprise.

"You are joking," he said slowly, as if he were half dazed.

And then, before she could say one word in explanation or defence, a footman stepped out of the darkness, having come from the house by some back way, and said in a hurried tone,—

"There are burglars in one of the rooms, sir, and Mr. Malet sent me to tell you."

"Which room? Have you put a watch—and sent for the police?" he asked quickly. "Go back to the dancing-room," he said, turning to Joanna, "but don't make a noise as you go," he



ad led, without a touch of tenderness in his to it.

"It's Miss Verreker's room they are in."  
"I'll soon get them out," and without another word he hurried away, and the footman with him.

Instead of obeying him Joanna stole after him, feeling sure that something dreadful was going to happen to him.

All was silent on this side of Wind-Grove Abbey, and presented a striking contrast to the southern façade, where light and music streamed out on to the terrace, and there was the constant sound of many voices, and cheerful ripples of laughter. Here there was the shadowy light, and the deep silence, and the apparent solitude, which tempt to deeds of crime. The chime of the stable clock as it told out the midnight hour added to the solemnity, and Joanna felt her heart throb wildly as she stopped under the shade of a syringa and listened. With strained ears she could hear the stealthy steps on the gravel. With straining eyes she could see the two figures approach the wall, and Gerald catch hold of something which dangled from her own window. It was evidently a rope-ladder, and making a sign to the footman to hold it steady, he began to climb up it. Joanna watched him in horror, for she knew that he had not any sort of weapon with him, and he was going to face an unknown number of desperate men, without even a stick to defend himself with!

She stood still for one minute as if paralysed with terror, and then she turned and ran back as fast as she could, in her urgent haste to fetch help.

The terrace had never seemed so long before, the row of mullioned windows was interminable. Faster and faster she went, her small satin high-heeled shoes scarcely making more noise than sparrow-claws. And then a pistol shot, loud and sharp, rang out upon the night air, and froze her blood with horror.

They were murdering him—before she could get help he would be dead—absolutely dead; he would never speak to her again. She would never know if he had forgiven her or not! Oh, Heaven, kind Heaven! save him! With a white scared face, she appeared at the first window of the dancing-room.

General Grey and Lord Cleveden were standing together deep in conversation; but they turned round at once, and looked at her in startled surprise, the General thinking to himself,—

"She knows that she has been found out."

Panting, choking for want of breath, she could scarcely get the words out. She laid her hand on Lord Cleveden's arm, and he could feel how she was trembling.

"Save him!" she gasped; "be quick, they are murdering him!"

"Who is murdering whom?" the Viscount asked, quickly.

"Burglars!—Gerald Graham," with entreating eyes, looking wildly from one to the other.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the General; "only tell us where!"

"In my own room, west corridor, ladder outside window!" she said, breathlessly.

"Oh, for my revolver!"

"No, don't wait!" she implored. "Go by the terrace, and round by the corner," pointing to the way she had come.

Cleveden had already gone; but the General, like a careful soldier, did not like the notion of being quite unarmed.

"Slip into the hall," he said, in a low voice, "get me a stick with a black knob, and bring it after me, if you've got the pluck."

"Yes, yes—only go!" she panted; and as he hurried off she ran into the house by a glass-door, and penetrated to the hall, which she was surprised to see quite empty, the men-servants all being engaged in trying to force the bedroom door or in catching the burglars outside.

She went from stand to stand looking for the stick with the black handle, while the band went on playing with irritating persistency that waltz which she had danced with Gerald only the evening before.

The sweet melody of "La Serenata" pursued her as she flew distractedly from one place to another till at last, in a corner, she found a small stand against the tapestried wall containing the life-preserver, and several other substantial sticks.

She took the first and one of the others, and hurried back again to the terrace, hearing cries and pistol shots, which acted like spurs to her eager haste.

At last she gained the corner, and saw a desperate fight going on on the gravel; but as the struggling forms swayed backwards and forwards she could see no sign of Gerald, her heart was sick with anxiety.

There was the General, who caught the life-preserver from her hand, and the next moment gave a swinging blow to a thief's hard skull; there was Lord Cleveden engaged in a tussle with another, who was very anxious to slip away into the darkness, and beyond them there were some of the servants similarly occupied; but no Gerald.

A man appeared at her window, and looked as if doubtful whether or not to come down that shaky ladder. She recognised him as Malet, the Earl's valet, and in an instant she knew that he was there in attendance on Gerald Graham.

In another minute General Grey was standing over his own particular burglar. Lord Cleveden, looking utterly disreputable, but fiercely triumphant, was holding a captured revolver in his hand, with the man from whom he had taken it lying at his feet, whilst two footmen were hanging on to a third, who had given in when he saw the game was up.

Some of the servants, who had been in pursuit of others, were coming back to give further help to the home party.

There was no longer any danger to dread in this quarter, so Joanna threw down the stick which she was still unconsciously holding, and fled.

Darting into the house by the first door she came to she made her way as fast as she could up the grand staircase, across the gallery to the west wing.

At the entrance to it she found a group of frightened maids looking down the corridor, but afraid to stir. As Joanna passed them Maria said, earnestly,—

"I wouldn't go if I was you, miss. They may have left some one under the bed; and they say Mr. Gerald's terrible bad."

"I wouldn't venture near the place," asserted Lady Rose's smart maid, who had not a pinch of courage in her whole composition. "It gives me the shivers to think of it."

Joanna passed on without a word, for it would have required something very awful in the way of danger to keep her from Gerald Graham when he might be in need of her.

When she reached the door of her room she found that the woodwork had been seriously damaged by the effort which had been made to open it from the outside, when it was locked and further secured by wooden wedges on the inside. She pushed it open, and looked in timidly.

She had shown plenty of pluck down there whilst the fight with the burglars was going on; but her courage failed her completely now.

The candles on the dressing-table were lighted, and their light fell upon the white face of Gerald Graham, who was lying very still on the sofa.

Malet was the only other person there, and he held up his hand to enjoin silence.

Without a word she sank upon her knees, and overpowered by a fear she would not acknowledge, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed piteously.

Oh! if he had gone from her without so much as a look of forgiveness in his darling eyes, she felt as if never again could she know a moment's peace.

"Gerald, speak to me!" she whispered, softly; but there was no answer, only the sound of hasty footsteps coming down the corridor.

## CHAPTER VII.

SAVING MY LIFE AT THE RISK OF HER OWN.

LADY WINSTANLEY and a number of her guests hurried into the room; and crowded round the sofa, almost trampling Joanna underfoot.

The Countess gave her a glance of cold surprise, as if she thought that she was making an exhibition of herself; but Malet said, in a low voice,—

"The poor young lady is a bit scared. She it was who gave the alarm, and she was in the thick of the scrimmage outside."

"Poor thing, how terrible!" with a sudden transition of feeling. "No wonder that she is so upset."

"How terrified you must have been," she said, compassionately, as Joanna struggled to her feet. "What has happened to this poor boy? Nobody else seems to be much damaged."

"They had a revolver and he was all alone; and with no weapon of any kind," Joanna answered, unsteadily.

"Mr. Graham has been wounded in the arm, my lady."

The Countess leaned her hand on Gerald's broad, white forehead, whilst somebody asked if a doctor had been sent for; and Malet was plied with repeated questions.

"My dear boy, where are you hurt?" Lady Winstanley said anxiously, for her nephew was like a son to her.

He moved, and presently opening his eyes, looked first at Joanna's white, eager face, and then at his aunt's, reserving the shadow of a smile for her. "It's nothing much," and he raised himself on his left elbow. "No reason to make a fuss, only my arm and a crack on the head which stunned me, I suppose."

"What's the matter with your arm?" in many eager voices.

"Did they get off, and what did they take?" not answering the question.

The Countess turned to Joanna.

"Do you miss anything? Is your watch safe, and that handsome chain you always wear?"

"I haven't looked," she said quietly, whilst the others exchanged glances, for it seemed to them the most extraordinary thing in the world that she had not flown to the dressing-case and wardrobe to see if her property were missing.

She turned to the toilet-table and saw at a glance that her modest dressing-case was wrenched open, that her watch and chain had gone from the Dresden-china stand, and several other small articles were not to be seen; but the loss of her jewellery seemed as nothing to her beside the growing doubt as to the loss of her lover's love.

"The watch I rescued," Gerald said, in a low voice, without looking at her. "I had a sharp tussle for it, and I've got it in one of my pockets."

"It was scarcely worth risking your life for it," she exclaimed, with a shiver.

"Only fancy our jiggling away down stairs, whilst all this was happening up here," Major Fitzroy cried in disgust. "I'd have given anything to have had a go in at the scoundrels."

"They ought to have told us," the Countess said, with a frown. "But now we must get this poor boy to his room."

Malet proposed to wheel him out on the sofa, but Gerald declared that he could stand, and helped himself up by Major Fitzroy's arm.

"I am afraid we have made a horrid mess of your room, Miss Verreker," he said with coldest courtesy, as he looked round at the disarranged furniture.

"That does not matter at all," she said bitterly, for his manner cut her to the heart.

"We will have another room prepared for you, as the police whom we have sent for will want to investigate this one. We are rather full up, so perhaps you won't mind the small one at the end of the passage?" the Countess suggested.

"I don't care in the least," Joanna said wearily, and then they all trooped out in the invalid's wake, and left her standing there in the centre of the floor, with white face, clasped hands, and a breaking heart.

"I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead!" she moaned in the bitterness of her spirit.

"La' Miss, you here still!" exclaimed Maria

the housemaid in surprise, as she bounced into the room about half-an-hour later. "We are going to move you into the other room, but we are not to touch more than we can help," bustling about and chattering all the while, "so that the police may see it just as it was left, and you will please make a list of all you've lost. The doctor's been—"

"Oh, what did he say?" Joanna cried, eagerly.

"Mr. Gerald's shot right through his arm, and the doctor says he's to be kept as quiet as a mouse, and he's getting quite excited like, and her Ladyship's in a way, and they do say the thieves came after the Verreker diamonds. Have you got them hidden away in a safe place? I wouldn't have charge of them for thousands of pounds."

"They are in London," said Joanna shortly; "but Maria, is Mr. Graham really bad?"

"A bit feverish, but that's nothing. How much have you lost, Miss?" Maria asked, as she looked round curiously, and her amazement knew no bounds when she found that Miss Verreker had not even taken the trouble to ascertain.

Poor Joanna took paper and pencil, and sat down by the rified toilette-table; but her thoughts wandered, and she did not get on very fast with her list.

The window was wide open, the damaged door had no fastenings, but flapped backwards and forwards in a most irritating way.

Clad in her low-necked, black grenadine, and sitting in a direct draught, she shivered every now and then, but scarcely knew that she was feeling cold.

Presently she finished her list in a hurry, and got up with a weary sigh.

The house was very quiet, as taking a candle in her hand she went softly down the corridor to the room which had been prepared for her.

The passage was dimly lighted by rose-shaded electric burners, but a brilliant light shone through the crack of a door which had been left ajar, and which she knew to belong to Gerald Graham's room.

It was odd—very odd.

It was not likely that they would have lighted a fire, on a warm summer's night like this, just because he had a wounded arm. And if there weren't a fire—what could be the meaning of this fierce red light?

She dared not go in, but she dared not pass on with so much as the smallest doubt of his safety.

Very gently she pushed the door open with the brim of the silver candlestick, and then with a wild cry she sprang forward, for the man whom she loved with all her heart was lying on the bed, apparently wrapped in a sheet of flame.

She tore down the curtain which had been blown into the flame of a candle which was standing on a chair, and took hold of him gently, because of his wounded arm.

"Wake up, wake up," she cried, hoarsely, as the flames spread across the head of the bed, beyond her reach where she could not get at them to stay their course.

Gerald opened his eyes slowly, for he had been dosed with a strong opiate, and it seemed as if he could scarcely collect his scattered senses.

He had been lying outside the bed, clad in a loose Turkish dressing-gown, in order that no pressure should weigh on his arm.

"What is it?" he said, sleepily, for his intellect was still wrapt in a narcotic fog.

"Fire," she said, pulling at him desperately, "quick, for heaven's sake, or you'll be burnt."

The flames were spreading rapidly, she could already feel their heat on the bareness of her soft, white neck, but in spite of the danger, a fierce joy possessed her.

Gerald Graham was in danger and she it was who was saving him!

With all her strength she dragged him off the burning bed.

Taking no care of her own self, she threw a wrap, which the housekeeper had left on a chair, over his golden head, and dragged him towards the door.

At that moment, the housekeeper who had only quitted her post as temporary nurse in order to fetch some medicated wool, stood like one paralysed by the sight before her, in the wide open door.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" she cried, throwing down the wool, and rushed forward to support her patient. "Your own dress, Miss, look at it, and your poor bare arms!"

Mrs. Mervyn tore a coat from behind the door, and tried to wrap it round them both, and at the same time, the Earl—Lord Cleveden—Major Fitzroy, and several others rushed in to help.

When her services were no longer needed, then the strain which she had put upon herself gave way, and Joanna sank in a heap on the floor.

"Poor girl, what was she doing here?" the Earl asked, as she was lifted from the floor, by the Major and the Viscount.

"Saving my life," Gerald said faintly, "at the risk of her own."

"A plucky girl, and no mistake," exclaimed the Earl. "We must get you out of this, my boy, but where on earth shall we put him?" turning to the others with a puzzled face.

"On my bed," said Lord Cleveden. "I'll go to the smoking-room. But do tell them to hurry up with that hand-engine, or the house will be burnt about our heads."

The others went about to fetch water-jugs, &c., and made a great fuss and a loud splutter as they threw their contents on anything that was burning, and after Gerald and Joanna had been hurried to their respective quarters, the hand-engine was brought up by some of the footmen, and a larger body of water poured on the flames with more effect.

When everything was over, and the fire nearly subdued, Lady Rose appeared on the scene.

She had been startled from her sleep by the evident excitement going on in the house, but she had stopped to put on a very becoming pale blue silk negligee, as well as to take her fair hair out of its curling pins. As all the noise seemed to centre in the west wing, she bent her steps in that direction.

"What is it? Burglars again, or fire?" she asked eagerly, as she met Lord Cleveden in the corridor, looking very much the worse for his experiences with smoke and flame.

"Fire. Graham has been nearly reduced to a cinder, but was saved just in time."

"Saved, who by?" she asked quickly.

"By Miss Verreker, of course."

"How provoking! This will give her another claim on his gratitude. I wish it had been any one else!"

"So do I. I wish you had been robbed, that I might have got injured in saving your jewels. I wish you had caught fire so that I might have risked my life in saving yours," he said, looking down into her face with a smile.

"You are very kind, but I'm just as happy without being robbed or burnt," she answered with a little laugh. "Were either of them hurt?"

"I don't think so. Miss Verreker's dress was quite spoilt, but that don't matter to an heiress."

"She isn't an heiress," impatiently.

"I forgot. Do you know I don't like the thought of to-morrow! I feel quite weak towards her."

"So should I if it weren't for Gerald. We must save him from her at any cost."

"But will he be saved? That is the question."

"Gerald would never marry a scheming adventuress," tossing her head. "Did you not notice how he avoided her to-night, all because of a hint I gave him?"

"They were together on the terrace, together at the burglary, together at the fire—I don't know what you want more. But, Lady Rose—"

"I am off to bed."

"But you haven't seen the scene of the catastrophe. A heap of damage has been done."

"That only means a long bill for my father to pay. Good-night."

"I wish you were not in such a hurry."

"If this is your idea of a hurry, it isn't mine," and she went off with a glad smile on her lips.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SHELL BURSTS.

"I EXPECT my son this afternoon," Lady Winstanley said confidentially to Joanna during the course of the next day, "so I thought we would have a private little tea all to ourselves, in my boudoir. You must be sure and come, for he is to bring a friend with him whom I want you to meet."

"If Lord Windgrove will only just have arrived, I am sure that you would rather be without me," Joanna said quietly, though her hands were trembling so that she could scarcely keep them still as she thought this friendly invitation might have something to do with the General's words—"We shall know the truth to-morrow."

"I especially wish you to be here," the Countess said with decision. "We shall have to be rather late, as the train does not come in till five, and then there is the drive up from the station; but we can have a first cup of tea in the drawing-room."

"I feel like a traitor and a conspirator," Lady Rose said in a low voice to General Grey, as they stood side by side on the terrace.

"Think of her as an impostor, and that will steel your heart," was the stern answer.

"But she looks so ill to-day, and I think of what she did last night. Gerald might have died but for her."

"Possibly; but it might be better for him to die than to marry an adventuress. I cannot forgive her for personating the daughter of my dear old friend."

"Did you know Sir Godwin well?" Lady Rose asked with some interest, for she could not turn her thoughts from the subject of the Verrekers.

"He was more like a brother to me than any of my own. We were together in Roberts's march, you know."

The day wore on slowly for Joanna, who spent most of it lying on a sofa trying to recover from her exertions of the night before, and thinking anxiously of the future.

She had written one line to Juliet, telling her that she would return the next day, and saying that she would explain everything when she arrived.

She was resolved not to see Gerald Graham again, and she thought her wisest course would be to slip away whilst he was confined to his room.

Very sad she felt as she thought of how his voice would linger in her ears; how his face would haunt her day and night.

Why had that man come up and interrupted them when she had only told the one terrible fact, with no possibility of an excuse or defence?

The door opened and in walked Malet, who gave a careful glance round the smaller drawing-room to see if Miss Verreker were alone, and then advanced close up to the sofa.

"Mr. Graham's compliments, Miss, and would you be kind enough to continue in writing what you began to tell him last night!" he said, respectfully.

Joanna's pale face flushed like a peony.

"I will write him a letter at once," she said, joyfully, as she rose from her seat.

"I will look in for it again in a quarter of an hour," he said, with his usual discretion.

Joanna's pen flew over the paper in her eagerness to excuse herself in Gerald's eyes. She told him how she was feeling bored and dull when Lady Winstanley's letter arrived. Juliet had given her permission to open any letters that might come to see if it were necessary to forward them.

How she opened this one, and the thought struck her what a joke it would be to personate the heiress, and find out if anyone would really think her better-looking and nicer because she was supposed to have a fortune at her banker's.

How she resolved to carry it out, and had no time for reflection during the bustle of preparation, and then how repentance came upon her as soon as she had gone too far to draw back—how she allowed the Major to flirt with her because she knew that he was in love with her fortune and nothing else; but when he (Gerald Graham)



seemed to like her, how she felt she must sink into the ground with shame, &c.

When the letter was finished, she felt happier. At least he would know all, and someday he might forgive, though she was afraid that he would never forget.

She looked like a ghost when she came into the Countess's boudoir shortly after five, and to confess the truth, all the rest were ill at ease, and instead of triumphing over the downfall of an impostor, they began to feel as if they were betraying an innocent friend.

All the arrangements for the ball were complete, and had been carried out by the well-trained servants, and the decorations formed a fruitful subject of conversation. Joanna pretended to be engrossed in an intricate piece of knitting, but in reality she dropped many stitches without knowing it, and her heart was throbbing with wild anxiety. Her ears being quickened by expectation, she heard the wheels of the carriage when it was still some way down the avenue, and when they stopped at the large front doors she turned deadly pale, and her heart seemed to be throbbing as loud as the beat of a heavy hammer.

Lady Rose turned away from the window at the same moment Lord Cleveden slipped in by a side door, the Countess gave a nervous cough, and a timid look in Joanna's direction—only General Grey seemed to be entirely satisfied with the situation, and fixed his eyes with a look of triumph in them on the opening door.

"Miss Verreker and Lord Windgrove," announced the butler, and Juliet looking sweetly pretty in a soft, grey dress and a large hat with a plume of feathers, came in with a pleasant smile of greeting, followed by the Viscount who wore a proudly appropriative air.

"I am delighted to see you," began the Countess in a voice that shook with agitation, for her kind heart was really much distracted by pity and compassion for the impostor; but she was interrupted by a joyful cry of "Juliet!" from the very person who was to be confounded by her sudden appearance, and Joanna, to the utter amazement of the plotters, sprang from her seat, rushed across the room, knocking down a little screen on her way as she threw herself into her cousin's arms.

"Joanna!" exclaimed the real Juliet in her great surprise, and that single word cleared up half the mystery, and gave a different aspect to the whole affair. The Countess looked at her daughter, and Lady Rose exchanged glances with Lord Cleveden, who nodded as if he meant to say, "I knew she wasn't an adventuress after all."

"Mother, haven't you a word for me?" asked Lord Windgrove, as he kissed her affectionately, whilst Joanna was whispering in Juliet's ear.

"I pretended to be you. I'm going to confess it now. Say what you can for me!"

Juliet's quick wits grasped the difficulties as well as the necessities of the position at once.

Struck dumb by astonishment at finding her cousin personating herself at the Abbey, and rather indignant at that assumption, her kind heart nevertheless suggested to her that it would spare Joanna a large share of blame if she could make them believe that she herself was aware of the trick that had been played on her aunt.

Poor Joanna, feeling like a thief on the point of confessing a theft, stepped forward, and said in a voice that would tremble in spite of her urgent efforts to restrain it.

"Lady Winstanley!" At the sound of her voice dead silence fell on all in the room, and Lord Windgrove turned round and looked at her agitated face with lively curiosity. So this was the Joanna whom Juliet had so often mentioned.

"Not a patch on her cousin," he decided at once.

"Lady Winstanley, I have to confess that I have played a little trick on you. I thought it would do no one any harm if I pretended just for once to be 'Juliet, the heiress,' instead of 'Joanna, the penniless.' I meant to go away yesterday, and then I would have written a full explanation directly; but some one"—here her voice faltered, and her pale cheeks flushed—"persuaded me to stay on."

Juliet laid her hand on her shoulder to en-

courage her, for she could see that she was suffering horribly; and looking up into her aunt's face with her irresistible smile, said, softly,—

"You will forgive our little joke, I hope. It is over now; and as it has done no harm to anybody, surely it may be forgiven."

"If it was a little joke got up between you that alters the whole case," the Countess replied.

"But it wasn't," Joanna began; but Juliet squeezed her hand to keep her silent.

"To tell you the truth we began to have doubts about her being the true Juliet, and then," with a deprecatory smile, "we really did not know what to think."

"I suppose you took me for an impostor?" Joanna said, raising her head with an angry flush. "I wonder you were not afraid for your spoons and forks!"

"Oh, hush!" exclaimed Lady Winstanley, in some confusion, as she saw a smile on her daughter's face. "Let us forget and forgive everything in our joy in welcoming our dear niece. Come, my dear, and have a cup of tea after your long journey."

Lord Windgrove pushed forward a low chair. Lady Rose shook hands cordially with her unknown cousin, and introduced the rest of the party to her. Juliet hesitated a moment before she sat down.

"I cannot be quite happy unless you assure me that my dear old Joe is no longer in disgrace," she said, pleadingly.

"Not in the least," the Countess said, with her kindest smile. "I can always forgive anything in the way of a joke, within limits," she added, *sotto voce*, as she poured out the tea.

"I could forgive you anything if it weren't for Gerald. You have deceived him heartlessly," Lady Rose said warmly, in spite of her mother's frown.

Joanna said nothing; but looked out of the window over the rich beauty of the gardens to the hills beyond with an expression of utter misery in her large eyes.

(Continued on page 500.)

## A WOMAN'S TRIUMPH.

—20—

### CHAPTER XXIX.

It was a raw March morning, and as he left the precincts of the house and began walking briskly through the grounds Lord Settefeld grew more and more annoyed that his sister should have hastened to answer the summons of this man even though death was hovering so near, when the journey she was taking must be fraught with at least possibilities of harm to herself.

"She is so absolutely out of health," he said to himself, and that pang of anxiety and hurt that had been so frequent of late in his mind whenever he had thought of his sister, came to him a little more sharply. "As soon as it is at all feasible, I shall try and get her out to some warmer climate. She ought to have gone at the commencement of the winter. I don't think I shall hesitate any longer in letting our mother know how really delicate Pat has grown; it is only my duty to do so, and mother, of course, is the proper person to look after her and take her abroad. Even if it were possible for me to live without my darling for a few weeks, I fear the arrangement would not be the happiest in the world; for it is useless, utterly useless, for me to shut my eyes to the fact that Miriam and Pat will never pull together!"

The man sighed impatiently. He had much on his mind just now in connection with his parliamentary work, and it fretted him not a little, apart from any deeper feeling, the knowledge of this lack of sympathy between the two beings on earth who were dearest to him.

"Pat is so obstinate," he said, a little angrily, and yet somehow the bitterness that had made him so hard and cold towards his sister slackened slightly in this moment. It was so unnatural to him to have to find fault with Patricia.

His mind seemed full of a thousand memories of her sweet, true, gentle nature—little pictures that dated far back into her babyhood days, and that stretched along in a straight unbroken line through the years they had spent together up to the time of his marriage.

Never—no never had Settefeld known his sister to fall from the high standard of moral worth at which he had always appraised her. He simply could not remember a single instance in which Patricia had done an unkind or a deliberately wrong thing. She had of course her share of faults, as all human beings must have. She had been very impatient as a child, and her temper had been rather quick; she had also been proud almost to an unbearable degree, but these natural blemishes had all been conquered, not only by wise guidance and teaching, but by the girl's own instinct of what was good, and gentle, and sympathetic.

For years before the separation between them, there had never been one jarring thought, one half hour of anger in their close communion and companionship, and Settefeld had found no one more quick in intelligence, or more sound in judgment than Patricia.

It was this very fact—this incontrovertible fact that Patricia was in all things just, wise and charitable, that made the sting of the present regret the more painful.

For if Patricia had never been unjust in all her life before, why was it reserved for this one influence to so change the whole tenor of her character, and bring out qualities, or rather 'traits' he had never seen before?

The position was a hard one and a sad one, for Settefeld was just too, and he hesitated (or rather he began to hesitate this morning for the first time since his rupture with Patricia) to put the entire and absolute blame on his sister; whilst it can easily be understood how his heart filled to the brim with love and trust of his young wife, more than hesitated to blame her.

"It is simply a case of a deep wide difference," he said to himself, as he strode through the grounds, the keen, east wind stinging him sharply as he went. "Where in all the world could one find two creatures more widely different than Mimi and Pat? They have not one grain of likeness between them, save that they both belong to the same sex, and how can anyone expect them to be warmly sympathetic? It is I who am to blame in reality! But I love them both so dearly that I cannot endure the thought there should be aught but the sweetest, closest bond of affection between them. A man is always so clumsy in these matters of sentiment and sympathy—he is as much at home in analysing and understanding the subtle and manifold parts of a woman's nature as an elephant would be at home in a boudoir! I must give up my dream of this deep friendship between my darling and Pat. I renounce it with a regret such as I have rarely felt before, but I am sensible enough I hope to recognize a defeat that is really a defeat, and that does not hold forth the smallest hopes of being anything else. My greatest part of this regret is the fact that Mimi seems to suffer so much from Patricia's attitude. Poor little child! it is so natural to her to win all the world, she cannot understand why it is she should fall here so completely."

The dark, resolute face softened, as it always did at thought of his beautiful wife.

The very trees, gaunt and leafless as they were, seemed to give forth the pictured memory of her loveliness, and to stir and thrill his heart anew.

"And I, who always mocked so much at the folly of love! I, who have been so merciless to other fellows! I am the very one to take the fever more violently than any other. Well, if to love and worship the young creature who has come into my life—to fall down silent before the monument of her pure white soul is to be mad—assuredly I am mad! And if to live the life of joy, of soft, sweet happiness such as I live now, is madness; then," Settefeld said laughingly, and yet more earnestly to himself, "may I never know sanity again. Ah, Mimi, my wife, my soul, thank Heaven for your love; thank Heaven for the beauty, the purity, the sweetness that is built up in your love!"

The cottage hove in sight at this point, and Lord Settefeld was not long in reaching the doorstep.

He found the door only pushed to not latched, and he entered the small abode unceremoniously. From the kitchen there came the warmth and glow of a big fire. Lord Settefeld went on towards this.

He expected to see Mrs. Smithson, but the neat red-tiled room was empty, although the table, spread with a scrupulously white cloth, bore evidence that someone, Smithson very probably, had partaken of breakfast.

The Earl paused. He had a double reason for his visit. He wanted to see Smithson on several subjects. He felt a passing annoyance lest the keeper should have gone out.

There was a curious, almost a painful silence in this little house, broken only by the loud ticking of an old-fashioned clock, and by the hissing of the big black kettle that stood on the hob.

Lord Settefeld was conscious of a chilled sense, almost of awe. He seemed to divine that the majesty, the sublime power of death had entered this humble abode; and though this man to whom death's cold fingers were extended was but an inferior and a stranger, the spirit of the man who was lord of all the land for miles around drew back, reverent and chilled by the near presence of the Mighty Reaper.

Under ordinary circumstances Lord Settefeld would not have hesitated to make his own presence known; he would have called lustily to Smithson or his wife, but now he did no such thing.

He stood irresolute in the doorway of the little kitchen; his eyes going over the details of the pleasant, homely surroundings almost unconsciously. Suddenly a faint—a hollow sound—struck his ear.

He gave a start, and turning, he saw that the door of the little room which he remembered Mrs. Smithson had been wont to call her back parlour, was pushed half open.

The sound of that low, hollow, fading voice came from within this room; there was darkness also he felt, rather than saw, and instantly he understood.

It was here the dying man was laid; here that Patricia had come to minister consolation at the last.

There was no sound of movement from within, only a heavy, an oppressive silence upon which the voice fell with a strength a clearness that would have been impossible had the stillness not been so marked.

Lord Settefeld hesitated a moment. His first impulse was to turn and go quietly from the house again.

How could he urge Patricia away in such a moment as this? In the presence of this life that was slowly merging into death, all mundane and ordinary things were pushed on one side.

Patricia was very delicate, but he could not draw her away from a task at once sacred and appertaining to her true womanhood.

He would therefore go, and he would wait awhile for her outside.

He moved round towards the entrance and then he stopped.

Patricia's voice had murmured something; and then that other voice, dim, fading as it was, had answered with a touch of human anguish in it, even whilst the spirit was hovering on the borders of the other world.

It answered that murmur of Patricia's wildly, almost fiercely.

"No—it is no wrong—Heaven—is my judge. I curse you Miriam Stapleton—I curse you—to the last I shall curse you! I—I have lived in vain. I must go without my hope, my revenge, my punishment—still I can curse you—to the last, and I will go to my grave praying that you may suffer as he suffered, that you may die as he died—deserted, dishonoured, alone!"

The man standing within the little kitchen put out his hand suddenly, and gripped the door-post.

He felt all at once cold and faint, his heart was beating fiercely in his breast, a blackness rose before his eyes.

Like a child or some frail, weak creature, he

fell half huddled against the wall, while from within the other room, came now the sound of that voice, growing sharper, clearer, as the frenzy of a final delirium seized him.

Words poured in a flood from his lips.

Wild, incoherent cursing, mingled with bitter accusations, the voice grew hoarser and hoarser, the words grew into an inarticulate whisper, they faded and faded.

Then there was silence, deep, horrible silence, and then from out this silence there came the sound of Patricia's voice, so filled with fright and mental agony as to be almost indistinguishable.

She was calling to her humble friend, the keeper's wife.

"Oh! come to me, quick—quick, come to me! He is so ill—he is so ill!"

The man standing against the wall in the kitchen made no sign, no sound.

The agony of fear and entreaty in his sister's voice fell on ears that were deaf to all that once would have appealed to them.

The situation held no other picture save that fearful picture of a dying man cursing the name of a woman, and branding her as something lower than the lowest animals.

Settefeld had a curious sort of exultation in his fierce, his ungovernable rage, in this moment. An exultation that the man who had given vent to those words, who had poured forth the story of Miriam's past, was now in the last agonies of death.

A terrible, a mad cruelty, filled his veins; with his own strong hands, he would have loved to grip this dying creature by the throat and slowly crushed out the flickering remnants of life from his body!

He stood perfectly still, Patricia's voice was calling on.

He seemed to know that her arms had been put about the frenzied figure to draw it back as it would have rushed from the bed.

But Patricia's very existence had gone from his consciousness in this awful moment, and as there came the sound of hurrying footsteps from above, he turned deliberately and made his way out through the back entrance of the kitchen, to the garden beyond.

Here, as he moved along in a set staid fashion, Lord Settefeld suddenly discovered the little maid servant of the cottage, ashen-white, and trembling in every limb, coming towards him with Smithson the keeper.

"I've been up to the village to fetch Dr. Cray, my lord," the keeper said, touching his hat.

"I'm afraid it's all up with this poor chap. My wife's been up with him all the night, and she thought he must go as every hour come. He clings to life though, poor chap, and he wouldn't be satisfied till he'd seen her young ladyship again—is she there still, my lord?—my poor wife was so fair done, this girl Maggie tells me, she had to go and lie down for a bit, that's why she come to fetch me, my lord. I don't think it's right Lady Patricia should be there alone; he might die I fear at any moment!"

The Earl's face, though very pale, showed no difference to the keeper's eyes, neither was there any difference in his voice when he spoke.

"Lady Patricia is still there," he said. "I did not go in; death is a serious matter, and it is not every one who is welcome at such a moment. I only hope it will not upset her ladyship, she is very far from strong yet."

Lord Settefeld spoke in a quiet set way. Had the keeper been less anxious he might have seen that his master spoke more slowly than usual, and that his eyes had a fixed look. Smithson noticed in time, he began discussing the matters he had in hand. He had been arranging a sort of shooting ground where the Earl and his friends could amuse themselves with clay pigeons. The Earl listened attentively.

"I will go and have a look," he said. "Is my gun here that you carried home by mistake the other day? If so, you can give it to me, I will go and have a shot."

"I'll fetch it, my lord. Maggie run you in, the missis maybe 'll want you. Poor child," the keeper added kindly, "she's fair scared with all this trouble."

The Earl gave a sharp nod of his head.

"Bring the gun," he said, and he stood there seemingly the same man, handsome, quiet, and rather grave as he usually was.

Smithson came back immediately.

"It's all over, my lord," he said rather agitatedly. "The poor chap's broke a blood vessel. My wife says Lady Patricia will have to rest a little before going back to the house. Will you wait for her, my lord, or—"

"I will come back for her," Lord Settefeld said, "look to me, Smithson," he added, as he turned away, "for all you may require, though the man is a stranger he must have decent burial. See to everything properly."

For the first moment in this brief conversation Smithson seemed to be struck with a difference in his master, but he attributed it to anxiety, and, perhaps annoyance, that Lady Patricia should have been in any way associated with so sad a moment. He stood and watched the Earl go away.

"He's vexed, I can see that, and it's natural he should be. I did my best to persuade the wife she'd better not fetch her ladyship," he muttered to himself, "but she wouldn't be said no, no how. He'd got something on his mind which he'd tell to no one but Lady Patricia, and so nothing would do but my old woman must go rushing up to the house this morning. I only hope his lordship won't be seriously annoyed!"

But here remembering the claims upon him within, Smithson turned hastily back to his home, and almost carried Patricia's trembling form up the narrow stairs to his wife's room.

"She must rest," Mrs. Smithson had whispered; "she's so frightened she don't seem to know nothing; we must send up for Mrs. Maxton as fast as we can. Poor dear, I'm sorry I brought her now; but he seemed so set on it, and that I thought as he'd lingered so long he'd likely as not last out the day, and I never thought as he'd got the strength left to die so violent like! Her poor ladyship will be ill after this, I fear!"

Smithson found Patricia quite passive; he lifted her up in his brawny arms, and in a very few moments he had laid her in a chair, and opened the window to let the cold pure air waft in upon her.

The girl's wan face touched the man's pity, and there was a look of horror in her big dark eyes that made Smithson most uneasy.

"Dr. Cray must see her at once," he said to himself, and then he withdrew gently and went below again.

"The Earl was here, you didn't see him!" he asked his wife.

Mrs. Smithson shook her head.

"No, I didn't know as he'd been; I was feeling so faint like. Her ladyship was so sweet; she just made me go and lie down, you know her way, and as I told you just now, I didn't think as how there would be no immediate change in him, and so I went. I'm heartily sorry I did go now," the good woman added with real regret, "though at the same time I couldn't very well have stopped along of him when I knew he wanted, poor creature, to say something private to her ladyship. It were a message, perhaps, to his mother, poor soul, ah! my heart feels for her, for he were a nice boy, I'd got real fond of him!"

And the sigh Mrs. Smithson gave was the truest testimony to this fact.

"You'd better wait along o' me till the doctor comes, and then you must go and fetch Mrs. Maxton, she's the one as knows how to look after a ladyship, and nice and angry she'll be with me," the keeper's wife added, "when she hears all that has happened!"

## CHAPTER XXX.

As a rule Lady Settefeld did not practise early rising—or rather she preferred to pass the first hours of the morning in her own room; but a certain restlessness had fallen upon Miriam since her interview with Patricia.

She had slept badly, and she resented the fact, and now as she lay on her pillows having read



her letters after her husband's departure she felt a decided increase in the restlessness and discomfort.

Without pausing to question herself as to why she did so, Miriam suddenly rang for her maid and ordered her to go to Lady Patricia's room.

"My love to Lady Patricia, and I should like to speak to her. I will either go to her or she can come to me."

The maid hastened away, just a little surprised, as she had been on the preceding evening when Patricia had appeared in the boudoir, for such ordinary little visits of intimacy had never occurred between Lord Settefeild's wife and sister; in fact it was pretty generally understood in the household that, as was vulgarly expressed, there was "no love lost" between the mistress of Belton Towers and Lady Patricia de Burgh.

The maid was speedily back, having received a curt announcement of Patricia's absence from Maxton, who had the insular prejudice very largely developed against all "naughty furriners."

Lady Settefeild bit her lip sharply when she heard where Patricia had gone.

She paused only a moment, then she came to her decision.

"Dress me at once," she said to her maid, "and bring my sealskin. I shall go out and meet Lady Patricia."

It was not long before Lady Settefeild was dressed in hat and coat and warm protecting veil.

"It is a disgustingly cold day," Miriam said to herself as she went downstairs, "but of course Patricia will not mind that; she will be only too delighted to go and hear all there is to hear from this creature."

Every thing that was worst in Miriam's nature was roused within her; she knew she was close at hand to some crisis, but she told herself she did not fear Patricia.

"She can do me no real harm!" she said to herself. "Supposing my luck should be so bad, that this man should have strength to tell her all, what then? It is to Patricia he confesses, and I think I am powerful enough to defy Patricia! I have Danvers in my hand, it will be her word against mine, and I think I know whose word will weigh most with Danvers. Besides," Miriam said to herself with a touch of triumph, "I have prepared the way a little. I could see yesterday that he was puzzled as to Patricia's extraordinary interest in this man, and did not either understand or like her agitation. That is a point I can press, and I will. The fight will not be long or bitter. Patricia, whatever she knows, will never speak the truth for Danvers' sake."

The tremendous difference between Patricia's deep disinterested love and her own jealous, vain pretence of affection had no power to touch Miriam except as on the present occasion, when she wished to build a certainty on Patricia's devotion.

"She would die rather than tell him," Miriam said to herself with absolute conviction; "of course I must be prepared for a *mauvaise quart d'heure* of some kind. She will draw away her skirts from me in horror I suppose," and Miriam gave a bitter little laugh; "righteous people like Patricia are always thorough, and so I must look forward to all sorts of silent horror—well, so long as it is silent I don't care for her horror. So long as she doesn't let the matter reach Danvers I don't care for anything."

Miriam had left the big, noble-looking house over which she reigned as queen by this time, and she turned involuntarily to look back at her home, at her possession.

She was still inordinately proud of her position, and at the mere thought of what might happen could a hint of the truth of her shameful deceit and hypocrisy ever come to the knowledge of the man she had married, had schemed

marry so deliberately, and who worshipped her so utterly—at the faintest suggestion of the possibilities of ruin and defeat that rose in her mind at such an imagination Miriam turned deadly pale under the thick veil she wore, and a coldness passed over her limbs far more trying and chilling than even the cold rush of the east March wind.

She soon shook off the gloomy foreboding. She knew Patricia too well to doubt her when Danvers was concerned.

"Where it touches him, she would die rather than do or say anything to hurt him; but for me!" and Miriam shrugged her shoulders.

She walked as swiftly as her little, high-heeled shoes would permit, in the direction of the head keeper's cottage.

She had seen no one of her house party as she had passed through the hall, but she did not trouble herself about them.

Settefeild, she told herself, was in the library as usual. This was the hour he always gave to his letters.

She did not go to satisfy herself he was there, she told herself she *knew* he was; he was as methodical in his habits as a piece of machinery, and every day since they had come to Belton, he had gone to his library to deal with his correspondence at this time.

In this disposing of his presence, therefore, Miriam was not acting without full precedent for what she thought.

It was destined, however, that she was to be surprised on this point in a manner she little expected, and certainly would never have desired.

She had only a dim idea as to the exact direction where Smithson's cottage was, but she could not go wrong she knew if she kept along the broad path on which she had started.

When she reached the more wooded part, she must pause and reflect before proceeding.

She looked anxiously for some sign of Patricia's tall figure coming towards her (though what she was going to say to the girl she did not know, that would have to be inspired by Patricia's manner), but there was no glimpse of it.

Miriam hated walking, and by the time she had reached the place where the path diverged into several smaller ones she came to a standstill.

She looked about her for some gardener or under-keeper, but no one was in sight.

"This of course," Miriam said to herself, angrily, "with about a hundred servants employed at Belton, there is never one when one is wanted!"

She was really annoyed for she did not want to walk an inch farther than was absolutely necessary.

As she stood hesitating, she suddenly saw the figure of a man walking along slowly a little distance off.

He carried a gun and wore gaiters; and as his back was turned and his head bent, Miriam did not recognise him in the very least.

She called to him, but her voice was not strong enough; so there was nothing to do but to follow him, and thus ascertain the right direction to the Smithsons' cottage.

Miriam walked swiftly after the man. She no longer felt cold; anger and the unwonted exertion had warmed her.

The sound of her footsteps on the hard ground suddenly caused the man in front to raise his head, then to pause, and then to turn round.

Miriam gave a little cry; it was surprise and fear mingled, as she recognised her husband.

In that very first glance at him the woman's vain, selfish heart sank like lead in her breast. She had no need of words to tell her something had come to him, something that had to do with her miserable past; something that had changed him utterly, absolutely.

Barely more than an hour ago he had left her, a lover full of passionate adoration for her beauty, a husband full of tenderness, sweetest, purest thought. He stood before her now—her judge!

Miriam shivered and retreated a few steps. Settefeild had evinced no surprise at seeing her. For the first time since their marriage he met her without a tender word, or the light of joy at seeing her gleaming in his eyes.

He stood leaning on his gun, and for one half moment he paused.

"I was just coming to you, Miriam," he said, his voice grave, not very cold, but with a curious sort of deliberation in it.

"You—you want me, Danvers darling!"

Miriam's voice was little more than a whisper. The chill of a deadly terror was creeping into her

veins—a terror for this quiet, white-faced man with his fixed dark eyes and his expression of severity that was indescribable.

As we have described before, Miriam had soon after her marriage, experienced a sensation of fear of her husband.

It was his quiet, grave power that frightened her, as well as his rigid sense of honour, his truthfulness, and absolutely straight dealing.

She had reason to know how merciless—in her opinion—he could be to those whom he detected either prevaricating or acting falsely. What mercy then would he extend to her if her deceit, her falseness, and that story of her woman's wanton heartlessness had been opened out before him?

She was so frightened she was trembling from head to foot. The man looking at her with that calmness, which was a cloak to such burning, tumultuous misery, such death-like pain, saw the shiver, and the knife went deeper into the wound. For if she were the pure white being he had loved, why should she shiver—why wince and fall back from the silent accusation of his eyes?

"You—you want me, Danvers!" Miriam faltered a second time.

He was so long without speaking she was forced to break the oppressive silence.

He answered her in the same quiet, deliberate way.

"Yes; I want you, Miriam." He looked at her an instant, then he shifted his gun under his arm. "You are tired; you must not stand. Come to this trunk, we can talk better here than in the house."

His manner was so gentle Miriam was deceived. She instantly rallied herself. She spoke to him quite brightly as she obeyed him, following him to the tree-trunk in question and seating herself upon it.

"I did not expect to find you, Danvers. I came out to look for Patricia."

He leaned his back against another tree and stood for an instant gazing down at her. Her beauty was shrouded by the veil she wore, but he knew each trait by heart. The exquisite softness and colouring of the skin, the delicate-cut features, the wonderful chameleon-like eyes, whose exact tone of colour even he could hardly have declared. How well he knew them; how marvellous they were! What woman living was so beautiful as she?

He bent his head and stifled a groan. Then, brave, true as he was, he conquered himself.

Hope, that strange exquisite current that can thrill even the charred embers of a dead heart, came creeping to him for an instant. The words he had heard—the hideous story, the history of her wrong to another, as well as her wrong to him, might they not be, after all, the wild, feverish ravings of a dying man?

How—how could he reconcile such a record of cruelty, of deceit, of treachery with so fair a face, so gentle a bearing?

He began speaking very quietly.

"Miriam, I want to ask you a few questions. Certain information has come to my knowledge to-day which I look to you to refute, or—to verify."

He took a sharp, deep breath.

"Have you ever in the days before we met known a man by the name of Cyril?"

Miriam sat very still. As he paused she turned her head.

"No!" she said at first in a quick, sharp way, and then she interrupted herself; "but I am wrong. Yes, of course, you must mean Cyril Lindsey! Poor Cyril! I knew him very well. I met him in Russia, in St. Petersburg."

"And he loved you, Miriam?"

She gave him a nervous laugh.

"He imagined he was in love. He was a foolish boy. Why do you ask this, Danvers; have you heard anything of Cyril Lindsey?"

How glibly she uttered the name of the man she had betrayed, deserted, and cursed!

Settefeild's voice was still very quiet.

"Yes, I have heard something of him." He paused a moment before proceeding. "You have never spoken to me of this boy. Why is this, Miriam?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I forgot him," she said, carelessly. "I have



"NOW YOU KNOW ALL. I DEFY YOU. YOU CAN DO YOUR WORST!" SAID MIRIAM, COOLLY.

met many people of whom I have not spoken to you, Danvers."

His answer came very very quietly.

"I fear," he said, "I fear, indeed, you have."

She began to grow frightened again. His gravity was still so great, his manner so strange.

"Oh! if you have anything against me do for Heaven's sake tell it out at once. I hate mysteries of any sort!"

The man beside her gave a shudder as she spoke.

"You deny that you gave this boy, Cyril Lindsey, any encouragement?" he asked, after a pause.

"Most assuredly I do!"

Miriam was so frightened she took refuge in anger.

"He was never in your life in any way!"

"Danvers!" Her tone was full of indignant protest. "What do you mean?"

"Will you answer my question?" was all he said.

She relapsed into a silence again; but when he repeated the question she replied to him, sullenly,—

"I deny that he was ever in my life!"

"Or that you had anything to do with him?"

"Or!" recklessly, "that I had anything to do with him at all! I hope now you are satisfied with this cross-examination!"

"Alas!"

The man answered her sadly. There was such an infinity of sorrow, of desolate, hopeless sorrow in that one word that even Miriam felt its power.

"Danvers!" she cried, excitedly, and she rose to her feet as she spoke, "something has happened. Some one has been making mischief. Some one has been trying to poison your mind against me, and I know who it is—it is Patricia. Oh! I can see it all very plainly. Patricia has determined to take you from me. She has been trying to hunt up all sorts of stories to turn you against me. She —"

Settefeld stretched out his hand.

"Leave Patricia's name out of the matter. You know that what you say is untrue—unjust. Patricia has never voluntarily spoken your name to me. She is incapable of what you urge against her!"

"Oh! she is a saint, everybody knows that, and I—well, I am the other thing, I suppose." Miriam's tone was unpleasantly reckless and bitter. "I must confess, Danvers, I do not in the least understand the drift of your present conversation. Why?"—Miriam was true to her old principle of *l'audace*—"why have you brought up the name of Cyril Lindsey in this extraordinary fashion? And why are you so rude to me when I answer you? Don't you believe me!"

Settefeld's breath came quick and sharp between his lips. He absolutely could not speak for a moment, when he did his voice was little more than a whisper.

"No," he answered her in that whisper.

"No. I cannot believe you, Miriam; I feel, I know, you are not speaking the truth!"

There was a weighty silence between them after this. A dogged, sullen anger surged in Miriam's brain overcoming even her fear. As the shock of what he had passed through had changed him towards her—so now the fury of her rage changed her towards him.

"And you are my husband, and dare to insult me in this way!" she said, as soon as she could speak.

Settefeld looked at her, she had flung back her veil, her face had a hard, cold look that destroyed half its beauty.

"Miriam," he said, gravely, "Why did you stoop to deceive me? Why did you not tell me there had been a story in your past? Why did you come to me with lies on your lips?"

She sat in sullen silence, and after pausing a moment, he went on speaking.

"It was, I suppose, my position that tempted you, my money, my name. Well, the old story, and yet how I have trusted you, how I have

loved you. How!" he broke off, the agony in his heart was so great.

"I would have forgiven you all—all—if you had only trusted me!" he said, hoarsely, as she sat with her delicate face set hard as stone, her little foot moving impatiently to and fro.

Suddenly his calmness went from him.

"Deny it! deny it! I will believe you even now. Your beauty has maddened me from the beginning. Your power is illimitable—deny this story, but deny it with your lips close to me. Come to my arms and tell me your lies lying close to my heart. You can make me believe you if you will. You can trick me as you have tricked me all along! You can blind my eyes to the truth and let me dream, as I have dreamed, that you are pure, and white, and good, whilst I know too well you are none of these things. Deny it," he cried, seizing her passionately by her hands, and drawing her upwards. "You are my love, my destruction, my dishonour, yet I cannot live without you. Let all the world speak what they will. Your words will overrule them all. Speak—deny it! deny it! Don't you see—I want you to deny it!"

Miriam looked into his haggard, white, wild face, she wrenched her hands from his. The cruelty that had been so strong with her in the past came to her aid now.

"No," she said, coolly, deliberately: "no, I will not deny it—the truth is out at last. I deny nothing. I was Cyril Lindsey's wife as you have heard. I married you only because of your money and your name. I am as black as you have thought me white. I have neither shame nor pity. Now you know all. I defy you. You can do your worst!"

With a bitter, mocking laugh she turned, and then, mad with her fury and her fear, she ran wildly from him.

(To be continued.)

TAKE CARE OF THE HEART; THE HEAD WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.





AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK FELICIA AND I BADE MR. TRESSILLIAN GOOD-NIGHT.

## THE SECRETS AND SHADOWS OF CASTLEGRANGE.

—101—

### CHAPTER XXIV.

I WAS fortunately spared the necessity of a reply to this sudden and unexpected inquiry from Mrs. Vasper—"Who are her own people—the friends of this Felicia Luck?" For, as it happened, Mr. Tressillian himself was saying at that instant in a reflective sort of tone to Felicia,—

"Ah, the Grahams—let me see. They belong, in a remote way, to the Dundas family, I believe?—the Dundases of Dene, Miss Luck, I think? Is not that so?"

"Yes," answered Felicia. She flashed a swift comical glance across the table at me, and then she looked downward into her plate; and for a while her eyes remained unlifted from it. Thus she waited for Julian's next remark.

"Hush," I meanwhile had whispered back to Mrs. Vasper; "you will hear now what they say." And so I got out of a somewhat awkward corner.

Mr. Tressillian went on musingly, fingering the stem of his claret glass as he talked.

"I used to know something of the Dundases years ago—the Sussex branch of them, I mean. Your relative, the Honourable Tabitha Graham, and Lady Agatha Dundas, an old friend of mine, would be— Well, I should say that a sort of second or third cousinship would, if anything, connect the two?"

"I dare say," murmured Felicia vaguely.

"And it was the late Miss Tabitha Graham, you say, who was your aunt?" pursued Julian, with friendly interest.

"I was her adopted niece," amended Felicia, in a low voice, flushing warmly and duskiy as she said it.

Before our coming to Castlegrange, she had begged me to tell Mr. Tressillian no more than this; to enlighten him in no wise further as to the story of her adoption by her erratic "Aunt

Tabby." She apprehended foolishly and sensitively that if the bare facts of the case, the whole melancholy truth, were once put before Julian, he would be reluctant to receive and harbour beneath his roof such "a nameless nobody" as herself.

I had tried hard to persuade Felicia that it was folly to reason in that manner, being most unwilling to deceive my generous kinsman in ever so slight a degree—pointing out to her earnestly that Mr. Tressillian and Madame Adolphe were two very different people; distinctly and utterly different, of course, in every way. But it was all to no purpose; and her entreaties for "a prudent reticence," as she called it, continuing unabated, I yielded at last and humoured her whim; and thus it was that Felicia had accompanied me to Castlegrange solely and ostensibly as the late Miss Graham's adopted niece.

Julian, glancing up at the moment, detected the dull flush on Felicia's swarthy cheek; the lowered eyes; the veiled hesitation in her manner; and, ever delicate in feeling, and tactful at all times with an almost feminine tact, he at once, with admirable desultoriness, turned the talk into another channel—speaking presently of the foreign towns and places which were alike familiar to both of them. Then Felicia's mercurial spirits rose again instantly; her lost vivacity was speedily recovered; her pretty laugh once more rang joyously through the dusky great old room.

Mrs. Vasper again leaned towards me. She had been watching Felicia silently, with flickering, half-closed eyelids, and now she whispered,—

"Take care, Hebe. Your friend's character has in it a grievous flaw. She is not truthful—in my judgment not innately and absolutely truthful."

At this a warm flush spread quickly in my own cheeks. If Felicia was not wholly truthful, I was thinking, then neither could I be so!

"How—how do you know?" I said feebly.

Mrs. Vasper's colourless lips just parted in the phantom of a smile; her long yellow rat-like teeth became for a moment or two faintly visible.

"I know what I see, Hebe Fairburn, and I see what I know," she replied oracularly. And then relapsed into her customary stillness which remained unbroken until we left the dining-room, with Julian as its solitary occupant.

When we three—Felicia and I and Mrs. Vasper—were back in the great drawing-room, poor old Aunt Tabby's adopted niece set herself valiantly to work to win the suffrages of our stony-looking companion.

Felicia's sharp instinct told her that this silent, drably-tinted woman was not, for some peculiar reason or other best known in her own mind, altogether amicably disposed towards the stranger. It was a case of mistrust and dislike at first sight perhaps, on the part of Mrs. Vasper; and Felicia resolved to lose no opportunity in trying her utmost to obliterate, to eradicate first impressions—never for anyone an easy task at the best of times! She did not as yet know Mrs. Vasper as I knew her!

Mrs. Vasper sat bolt upright, stitching by a tall shaded lamp. Felicia crossed over to her in the most friendly way possible; and, with delicate touch and a fine show of interest and admiration handling a portion of the needlework, she said earnestly,—

"How very lovely! May I ask whether this is your own design?"

"It is not, Miss Luck. I bought it in Waybridge already marked out," replied Mrs. Vasper evenly. She did not look up, nor did her needle cease clicking to and fro.

"But do you never design on your own account?" persisted Felicia, in the same earnest, interested tone.

"Never, Miss Luck. I have neither the time nor the talent for it."

"Do you know, I have some charming patterns upstairs! Hebe and I bought them at a shop on the Parade in Bath," said Felicia genially. "Shall I show them to you, Mrs. Vasper, since it is plain to me that you are a judge of this sort of thing—would you like to see them?"

"Not to-night, I thank you, Miss Luck," replied Mrs. Vasper, immovably as ever.

"I am very fond of the work myself," observed Felicia then.

"Indeed."

"Yes. We used to do heaps of it in our leisure time—particularly on wet half-holidays—at Madame Adolphe's."

"Indeed."

"Yes. But of course," continued Felicia, in so wooing and confidential a strain, that it might have won the responsive goodwill of Medusa herself, "we did other things, useful things, I mean, besides. For instance," said she, romancing rather freely upon the spur of the moment, "we darned our own stockings and mended our own gloves, and—and all such little necessary things as that, don't you know?"

"Indeed."

Felicia sighed involuntarily, and threw a despairing glance towards me.

"Well, if we hadn't," said she brightly, "who do you suppose would have done it all for us?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Luck," said Mrs. Vasper stonily.

Felicia was still engaged in her laborious uphill task when Mr. Tressillian quitted the dining-room and joined his womankind quite early. He was followed almost directly by the young man Willis, who came in with the cups and saucers and a delightful aroma of coffee.

Julian limped straightway over to the sofa whereon I was sitting idle and alone; and said in his gentle, kindly way,—

"Well, Hebe, you are glad, I hope, to return at last to Castlegrange?"

"Oh yes! Very, very glad, of course."

I locked my hands together nervously in my lap; tried oh! so hard not to appear fidgety and school-girlish; and looked up at him quickly with what I thought afterwards must have been a rather foolish, spasmodic smile.

He seated himself by my side on the sofa, and when Willis came up to us with his tray, Julian with a preoccupied air gave me a cup of coffee from it.

The servant gone and ourselves alone again, Mr. Tressillian remarked that Miss Luck seemed a bright, vivacious, well-informed girl, and that he hoped for my sake she would make her home at Castlegrange for as long as I could induce her to remain there with us.

I made a gesture of deprecation—of discontent. At that moment I did not want to talk of Felicia Luck.

"Mr. Tressillian," I began, almost impatiently; but he stopped me.

"Why, Hebe," said he, with a grave, surprised smile, "am I to be Mr. Tressillian, then? Surely that is a very formal style of nomination—at all events, from you to me; is it not?"

"I—I do not know."

"Why, there is a distinct sort of relationship between us; you must try to remember that," he said simply, "and call me Julian. I dare say I do seem quite an old man to you, Hebe; and soon, dear, I shall be forty-four years old, you know; but if you mean to call me Mr. Tressillian—always Mr. Tressillian—I am sure that I shall feel older still!" And he smiled again.

"Julian," I said, with a spasm of courage and timidity commingled, "tell me—tell me truly—have I vexed you or offended you in any way; are you disappointed in me; is there anything I have done—if so, unwittingly enough, I'm sure—to make you—to—"

"Impossible, Hebe," he interrupted quietly; "what do you mean?"

"You do not seem the same," I went on, in a hurried, headlong manner, not stopping to choose my words or my phrases, only desperately anxious to say plainly what I wished to get said before my sudden spark of courage should flicker out wholly and leave me dumb and frightened at my own temerity—"you do not seem the same—and—and the change in you troubles me; hurts me indeed; makes me unhappy—it does really. You did not meet me—us—at the station; you were not even here at Castlegrange to welcome us when we arrived; you spoke barely a word to me all through dinner; you have not told me whether

you think that I am—im—proved or grown or—or—anything!" I said, with an almost unconquerable inclination to burst out crying on the spot. However, in this silly desire I had sense to restrain myself; recollecting that I had read or had heard somewhere or other that all men, whoever they be, detest "scenes."

"I think, Hebe, you have grown—well, how shall I express it!—let us say hyper-sensitive, somewhat fanciful, eh?" observed Julian seriously, but not looking at me now.

"Oh, no, I have not!" I answered with some warmth. "I may not—I mean that I may be rather sensitive in some ways, on certain points, but I am certainly not fanciful in the sense you mean. And then, too, everything at Castlegrange, now, seems—seems—strange and changed and wholly different from what I remember it six years ago. I—I do not like these great wide lofty rooms after the snug oriel parlour where we used in the times gone by to meet at table. I remember it all so well!—and—and somehow it was more like home then. Are we always in future going to live in state like this?"

"State do you call it?" he said, absently—"state, Hebe?"

"Certainly these big high rooms are grand and stately compared with the oriel parlour and others like it that I know of in this house," I answered, in accents of discontent.

"Hebe," Julian said, after a pause, "I wonder whether you remember that evening at Thorpe when we, you and I, went for a stroll together in the twilight and met your friend Bertie Wilford in the pasture-grounds amid the dawns?"

I reflected for a moment or two; and then clearly recalled the circumstance.

"Yes; I remember it perfectly."

"On that self-same evening, if you recollect, I explained to you that, should you grow up and live to become of age—twenty-one years old—you would, as the sole surviving near kin of your mother and—and your Aunt Doris, be then what the world calls 'a great heiress,' you know."

I was silent. I was still not in the least ambitious of becoming a great heiress. I was dimly aware that the exalted position would in all likelihood bring with it more pain than pleasure.

Julian went on half lightly, half soberly,—

"Then also we should remember that there is myself—my own worldly possessions cannot be lost sight of; they must pass to somebody when I am gone. Castlegrange itself, and everything belonging to it, I of course have no power over after death; as you well know, Hebe, the fine old place is strictly entailed. It will pass, I suppose," he sighed, "to the Cheviot-Tressillians in the north—there is no lack of males in that direction, I believe, though old Squire Everard, your grandfather, would never acknowledge them as true Tressillians at all. He was wont to affirm that I was the last of them—of the real old stock. But all else that is now mine, dear, will be yours when I am dead. You will be my heiress likewise, you see. Save for you, Hebe, I am alone in the world. I have no one else—no one for whom I care."

The tears came swiftly back to my eyes, and made everything around me very dim. I laid my hand timidly on Julian's arm.

"Pray do not say that," I entreated. "It is hard to hear; it is such an unnecessarily gloomy view of things. You may marry," I said earnestly—"oh, why not?—and little children, you know, may be born here to live at Castlegrange."

Julian's strong white hands clenched themselves involuntarily and dropped despairingly to his sides as he sat. His dark head too had sunk downward, so that I could no longer see the pain on his face.

"That is so likely, Hebe!" he said, in a hoarse sighing whisper—"as likely," he added almost passionately, "that I shall tomorrow morning wake up in my bed to find myself fashioned like unto other men!"

"Julian, forgive me," I ventured, my voice and my heart alike full of deepest, tenderest pity—"but oh! I think, I do indeed think that you look at things in too mournful a light, in far too hopeless a way, because—because—"

"Hush, Hebe, please," he said. "It is always a foolish waste of time to discuss improbabilities—impossibilities. I want no pity—I feel it no longer as I used to feel it. The bitterness of death as it were is past—"

He checked himself now; and with a visible effort recovered his self-command.

"No, my dear," he continued then, kindly, "what I wished to put clearly before you, to try and make you comprehend, is that now you are grown up into a person of importance, a young gentlewoman of finished education, of great expectations, and with, as I hope, a brilliant future before you, it is meet—so it seems to me—that Castlegrange should wake up as well as it is able in honour of your home-coming 'for good'—which is an accomplished fact at last; should throw off, so to speak, the dust and brown-holland of long years' duration, and that the best and finest apartments the old home has to show should be duly prepared and brightened for your reception. Besides, would it not have been a poor compliment to your friend and guest, Miss Luck, to introduce her to, to ask her to inhabit with us, our inferior rooms, when these others, which in your grandparents' time were the ordinary dwelling-rooms of the family, were standing cold, dark and vacant, serving no reasonable purpose whatever? After all, handsome apartments are built in a house to be used and lived in, as well as the cosier and homelier ones. Do you not agree with me?"

"Well, perhaps you are right," I answered meekly.

"Of course I am right—at any rate, let us admit it in this matter," he rejoined cheerily. "The oriel parlour you're so fond of was all very well perhaps for a hermit whose sole occasional visitor was the steward of the estate; but the hermit must now bear in mind that he has a grown-up ward to amuse and look after, and so must endeavour to do his duty. By the bye, we were speaking of Miss Luck a minute ago. Observe her now, Hebe. I am afraid she is dreadfully bored over yonder—she and Mrs. Vasper do not seem to be getting along together as well as they might. Let us go to the rescue, shall we, and suggest a little music?"

"Yes, Felicia would like it, I know," I agreed; but I sighed a little unwillingly, though I hardly knew why.

I was right. Felicia was enraptured with the notion—was only too thankful of an excuse, in fact, to break up her *l'été à l'été*, if such it could be called, with Mrs. Vasper.

Julian sat down to the piano. Hard by, within the ruby halo shed by her pedestal lamp, sat Mrs. Vasper, still stitching at her embroidery in silence, and feeling it may be grimly self-satisfied in as much that the blandishments of Felicia Luck had been brought into play unprofitably.

Mr. Tressillian, at our request, Felicia's and mine, was giving us the tenderest of the "Lieder ohne Worte," and his rendering of Mendelssohn's lovely music was, I could perceive, a revelation to Felicia Luck, as, indeed, it had been to me on the occasion of my first listening to it; notwithstanding I had more than once, in our school-days, tried to describe to my friend how transcendent were the musical gifts of my kinsman Julian.

Felicia listened to him in undisguised admiration, with lithe brown fingers clasped about her knee. Evidently she had expected nothing of the kind.

Under cover of the music, someone else had noiselessly entered the great drawing-room, and now quietly approached Mrs. Vasper—a woman-servant whom I could not recall having seen formerly at Castlegrange.

This person, I learned presently, was Carter, Mrs. Vasper's special attendant, who, it appeared, had joined the household some time within the past twelvemonth or so.

Carter, who was a rather tall and bony-made woman of middle age, stooped over Mrs. Vasper's chair respectfully, and said something in a low voice to her mistress. I found myself trying as it were insensibly to catch what the woman had come to say; and for my pains I overheard two words—

"... Miss Knowles."



Miss Knowles! Although I was once more beneath the roof of Castlegrange, the fact of the existence in the house with us of Mrs. Vasper's afflicted niece had somehow wholly slipped from my mind.

But now the sound of her name falling thus familiarly yet unexpectedly upon my ear awoke many a strange memory, many a slumbering fancy, associated with the troubles and the shadows of the past. I became very quiet and thoughtful as I pondered these things.

Mrs. Vasper rose immediately, work in hand, and, with no word of excuse to anyone, followed the woman Carter out of the room. And we saw no more of her—Mrs. Vasper—for several days after that evening.

At eleven o'clock Felicia and I bade Mr. Tressillian good-night. He accompanied us out into the barons' hall, and lighted the candles which were awaiting us there.

"Good-night, Miss Luck," he said, pleasantly, to Felicia. "I hope, for Hebe's sake, that you will not find life very dull and stupid with us here, and want to run away from us, perhaps, at the end of a month!"

Her eloquent eyes would have answered him, even had her tongue remained silent.

"I am homeless now that my—my aunt Tabby is dead," she said simply; "and I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Tressillian, for inviting me to stay at Castlegrange with Hebe. Now that I am really here, my one fear is that I may be tempted to out-stay my welcome."

"You ridiculous Felicia!" I said; and linking my arm affectionately within hers, we moved away together in an upward direction. She nodded brightly over her shoulder to Julian, who stood there now solitary in the hall, gravely watching our ascent to the gallery above.

We found Selina Ann in my dressing-room, patiently waiting until we should come up. When Felicia was in bed—she said she was deliciously tired and "dozy," and had quickly scrambled in—and my maid was about to depart to her own quarters, I questioned her in an undertone about Mrs. Vasper's unhappy niece.

"Selina Ann, how is Miss Knowles now?"

"Very ill, we fear, Miss Hebe," she replied, in her plain, honest way; and lingered on the threshold to tell me further that Mrs. Vasper's niece never now quitted the house; in fact, had not been out-of-doors to take the air for more than three years gone by.

Of late, it seemed, Miss Knowles's health had completely broken down, and she lived the life of a confirmed invalid in the rooms which she and Mrs. Vasper shared between them.

A little more than a year ago Mrs. Vasper had notified to Mrs. Bell that she must have regular and permanent assistance of some kind—the condition of her sick niece rendered such an arrangement a matter of necessity.

Mr. Tressillian himself, had, of course, been consulted by letter upon the subject—he was in Spain at the time—and, shortly afterwards, Carter, the quiet, middle-aged stranger had appeared at Castlegrange.

Mrs. Bell had certainly thought this a little odd; because, as it was, there were too many idle maids already in the house, most of them no longer young and trustworthy enough, doing scarcely anything besides eat and drink and gossip one with another throughout the day.

Surely one of these could have been taken by Mrs. Vasper, and well spared by Mrs. Bell, for a regular handmaid and assistant in the south rooms. But doubtless Mrs. Vasper knew best what she wanted, and Carter had accordingly arrived in their midst.

She was a person, Selina Ann believed, who had formerly been a hospital nurse in London—indeed, Mrs. Vasper had once known her, long ago, somewhere or other in a hospital there, Selina Ann also believed. There was a rumour to that effect in the servants' hall.

"Ah, long ago," I said, musingly, "I remember I used to think that there was someone else besides her niece living in those south rooms with Mrs. Vasper."

"I know you did, miss," smiled Selina Ann,

"And what a rare job I had, too, I remember, to persuade you to think different!"

"Did you, at the time, I wonder, really convince me to the contrary? I—I almost forget," I said, thoughtfully, smiling back at her. "I recollect perfectly well, though, that the face of the—the woman whom I saw in the corridor on that Sunday afternoon long ago, was in no wise disfigured, except by the ravages of acute sorrow and suffering. And I am sure I have always understood that Miss Knowles wore a veil out-of-doors on account of the disfigurement of her features."

"That is what everybody at Castlegrange would tell you, miss," said Selina Ann, placidly. "Good night—"

"Yet one moment," I cried. "Does Mr. Tressillian ever play the organ at night now, when Miss Knowles is restless and cannot sleep?"

"He has not done it, Miss Hebe, to the best of my knowledge, since he came back to Castlegrange from his travels in foreign lands—we have not heard him, anyhow; and somehow I don't fancy that Miss Knowles is strong enough to wander about at night now, even if she was restless and wanted to."

"Well, good-night, Selina Ann."

"Good-night, miss," replied she; and softly shut the door.

"Hebe," called out Felicia drowsily from her room, "what are you and that girl of yours chattering about? Did I hear you saying that there is a ghost or spectre in this big old house that walks and talks at midnight? Because if so—"

"I believe there is more than one, dear," I put in half playfully, half sadly.

"Then," cried Felicia, in a tone of affected horror, "would it not be as well to lock the doors that open on the corridor? I'm partial to spirits, as the old toper said—but ghosts I can't abide!"

"Sleep well, Felicia, have no fear," I answered, a trifle bitterly, perhaps. "The ghosts, if such there be at Castlegrange, won't come hither to disturb us. Their home is far away somewhere in the south rooms. We are all right."

"I devoutly hope so, I'm sure," said Felicia; and she pulled up the bedclothes clean over her head, and wriggled downward out of sight.

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE bright spring days went quickly by and lengthened imperceptibly into glorious summer weather; and a glorious summer at Castlegrange was a thing of beauty indeed—something to be remembered—a joy for ever!

It was but a short while ere Felicia Luck declared to me that she felt so much at home in the dear old house—as she already called it—that she might herself have been born there and lived there all her life!

It did one good merely to see her so blithe and happy again—her old bright restless self—and I am sure by the time the late May and the early June roses were once more in bloom in Dame Lucy's garden, the mortification she had suffered at the hands of Miss Graham's relatives was entirely forgotten, or at all events could be remembered without pain. For Felicia, now, there remained only the tender memory of "Aunt Tabby" to link the present with the past.

As I have hinted, for some days after our arrival at my kinsman's home, Mrs. Vasper remained invisible to Felicia and me. Mr. Tressillian explained to us that Miss Knowles was often so ill that her aunt very properly did not care to leave her niece wholly to the ministrations of the attendant Carter. Mrs. Vasper preferred to sit with and wait upon Miss Knowles herself when the poor lady's sufferings were greater than usual.

There was every possible accommodation and comfort for an invalid and her nurses in the south rooms, Julian in a casual way gave us to understand.

Indeed those rooms of Mrs. Vasper's were in every convenience and particular as an abode

apart. I often stared upward at the windows of them, wondering whether I should ever catch Miss Knowles looking out. But I never did.

And by degrees it began to dawn upon us—there was no shutting one's eyes to the fact at last—that Felicia and I were left very much, indeed singularly so, to ourselves and our own devices. For although Miss Knowles was by-and-by reported to be better, Mrs. Vasper, notwithstanding the amendment, appeared amongst us only at meal-times; and not always then; and it really seemed to us as if those same meal-times in the great dining-room were likewise to be about the only occasions when we should meet and speak to Julian Tressillian himself.

He lived, we found, a great deal alone, either in the library or in his own study. He took long solitary walks which lasted sometimes for hours, never at any time inviting us to accompany him. His only visitor, from week's end to week's end, was stout Mr. Stone the steward.

Occasionally, it is true, he would play to us after dinner if we begged him to do so; either upon the organ in the gallery or perhaps upon the grand piano in the barons' hall below—as often as not, though, he would entreat us to excuse him; he was in no mood for music; he was getting old, he supposed, and perchance ceasing to care for it, he said one day, with a forced smile, which I thought was also an exceeding mournful one.

Certainly, in these days, he was ten times more of a hermit, a moody recluse, than he had been when I had visited Castlegrange as a child six years before. He appeared, too, to have forgotten what he had said to me on that first evening, the evening of our arrival—about "Castlegrange waking up as well as it was able in honour of my home-coming for good" . . . . . About "his now having a grown-up ward to amuse and look after" . . . . . and how he must try and do his duty."

Yes; he seemed, indeed, to have totally forgotten everything that he had said on that night; and I believed now, I could not help believing, that he systematically avoided me. Possibly he disliked me, now that I was a woman and a child no longer. Grown up, I reminded him too cruelly, recalled too painfully the image of the dead and lost Doreen! . . . . . He could not now endure the sight of me . . . . . Ah, that was it—my daily presence in the house—that was his trouble unquestionably!

Then something that Selina Ann said one day—it was by the purest accident that I ever came to know it—did but serve to confirm this melancholy idea.

We, she and I, had been speaking of Mr. Tressillian's absence from home, and I observed how glad everyone at Castlegrange must have been to get the master of the house back again in their midst after all those long years he had been away.

"Oh, but he did come back sometimes, him and Mr. Danvers together," my maid said ingenuously. "Three or four times, or mayhap 'twas more, the master came home and looked into things a bit; just saw how we were all getting along like, Miss Hebe, you know, and then went away again to the foreign parts he seems so fond of."

"Returned to England!—actually came here to Castlegrange, do you mean?" I exclaimed incredulously. "Surely you are mistaken, you must be dreaming, Selina Ann!"

"Oh no, miss!" cried she, staring. "The Squire, I do assure you, was here several times. He and Mr. Danvers wasn't away from us all the six whole years in a lump like. You don't mean to say that you thought it was like that, miss?"

I turned away.

"No, no, of course not!—but—but—but for the moment I had forgotten, I was thinking of something else," I answered as carelessly as I could. But oh! how pained I felt; how keenly hurt at this fresh evidence of Julian's indifference and neglect of me!

Several times in England during the past six years! And never once had he taken the trouble to journey a few additional miles to visit me at the house of Madame Adolphe!

Nor had he deemed it even worth while to re-

main at home, in order to bid me welcome on my arrival at Castlegrange! . . . . On the contrary, in spite of vague protestations and promises even vaguer, he had shunned me unmistakably then, and persistently so ever since!

In the first heat of the painful discovery I resolved to upbraid Julian when we should meet presently in the barons' hall or in the drawing-room before dinner; but on second and cooler thoughts I decided that I would not—it could do no good, not the least in the world, it should be beneath my dignity to complain!

The stormy, rebellious feeling passed away, and left me with a deep sense of sorrow and loneliness, and also, it may be, of wounded self-esteem; for there is something of vanity in one and all of us!

"Oh, Felicia," I said to her wistfully on that selfsame day, "it is a good thing for me that you came! How glad I am that you are with me, dear! You must never, never go away and leave me; for, ah me! how lonely should I have been here without you. I shudder indeed to picture it!"

"Well, yes," said she reflectively, putting on her droll American twang—"guess you would. Do you remember," she continued jokingly, "what I once suggested to you when we were together at Bath—namely, that I should avoid the misery of an uncertain future by the bold and admirable coup of becoming Mrs. Julian Tresillian of Castlegrange! But, there, he won't give me even the ghost of an opportunity, you see! Possibly he discerns my intentions, and is far too wary—I never knew such a man! One can never get at him as it were—seldom, indeed, get near him. Really one might just as well expend one's little wiles and blandishments with the view of impressing and finally subjugating that mossy old sundial out yonder there in Dame Lucy's garden!"

"Oh, do not jest about it, Felicia," I said in a despairing tone. "I am troubled, really worried, dear. I mean—I mean, my cousin Julian is growing more of a recluse, more of a hopeless hermit every day; and—and I feel sure that it cannot be good for him, you know, Felicia, to lead so solitary a life. I had hoped—I had expected—that is, I wish, oh! how I wish that he would try—"

I broke off with a dejected sigh. I hardly knew what it was that I did wish—certainly I could not then have put the desire into speech; for regret hurt me as it were on the one hand, and pride on the other.

"Well, I must say," struck in Felicia cheerfully "that the owner of this darling old place is a fine specimen of the hermit-crab—there I agree with you thoroughly—and life here is unquestionably, for me at any rate, an altogether novel experience. I could not have imagined a community of souls assembled beneath one roof so absolutely divided in all their daily aims and interests as we appear to be here at Castlegrange. For example; look at ourselves, Hebe, you and me—living apart from the rest of the old mansion's inhabitants, as one might say, up here in these charming bright western rooms which seem leagues away from everybody else's; though, for myself, I can honestly aver that I am as happy and contented in them, with you, my pet, for a companion, as the day is long. Then somewhere or other in the south wing—far removed from portly Mrs. Bell and the numerous domestic staff she governs—you lodge that horrible stony creature you call Mrs. Vasper and her mysterious afflicted relative whom one never sees. Somewhere or other downstairs in the bachelors' quarters, the master of the house also dwells apart—doubtless, like some gloomy necromancer of old, working weird spells, burning the midnight oil, and laboriously yet vainly searching after earth's dark unfathomed secrets which are never throughout the ages to be revealed to mortal man! Forsooth," said Felicia Luck, in sepulchrally tragic tones, "a strange divided household!"

"You are too absurd, Felicia," I said wearily; and, speaking, I rose from my seat by the open tinted lattice, in at which the summer creepers were nodding sweetly, and went over to the piano; there to play softly fragments of Beethoven and Mozart as a soothing accompaniment to my own troubled fragmentary thoughts.

It was nearly June now, warm "blue unclouded weather," and the afternoon was very hot and still out-of-doors, but deliciously cool and shadowy within the house. So Felicia and I had decided to spend it quietly at home, and to write certain letters which were owing to friends.

These letters, however, had been written and were now ready for the bag; but we were still in our pretty octagonal sitting-room upstairs in the western tower, that overlooked Dame Lucy's garden and the sunny park and forest beyond.

I had been writing to Bertie Wilford; and also to Mrs. Joyce. The former, by the way, an ex-crable correspondent of late, was back from Germany and living again, I believed, in London; at all events, I had addressed my letter to his studio in town, not knowing where else to send it at this date—the latter, who still dwelt peacefully at her Blackheath cottage, would, I hoped, with Julian's sanction, pay me ere long a visit at Castlegrange.

Long ago—I had not forgotten, if he had—Julian had promised me that Mrs. Joyce should visit me there, and remain with me, too, just as long as she pleased.

Yet far back indeed in the dim past, now, seemed those idle, happy, old Thorpe days, with their ridiculous pretence of discipline and "school"—when I had dwelt contentedly enough with Mrs. Joyce and Prudence Best, and had loved better perhaps than aught else upon earth a jaunt over the downs with Bertie in the covered-cart!

(To be continued.)

## THE SQUIRE'S SON.

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### CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was a strange and somewhat dangerous task that Reginald Dartmouth's secretary had undertaken; but there was nothing of doubt or fear in the dark eyes, which through their sheltering spectacles watched the beautiful Countess, as leaning on the arm of his master she glided across the magnificent saloon, or seated between the Count and the duchess rested on one of the fauteuils of the grand drawing-rooms.

He had been told to watch, and John Stanfield, the secretary, was watching, watching with keen, all-noting, never-resting eyes, that would have done even a woman, the keenest of all watchers, credit.

No minute of the evening upon which he had undertaken his task did he let the Countess out of his sight.

He stood, shrouded by curtains, watching her as she brushed past him.

He walked on the terrace with bent head and slouching gait while she read on the lawn, he stood by the carriage with absent gaze for her to pass, still keenly noting.

And the result was a strange one.

Alone in his room that night, waiting with the keys in his hands till all the great place should be still, he murmured,—

"Through her I shall reach him—ay, through her, for Reginald Dartmouth, after his own selfish fashion, loves this beautiful, high-born Countess, and where one loves he is lost."

And the silent secretary sighed at the last words as if they found an echo within his own heart.

At last all was still, the lights in the saloon and drawing-room were extinguished, the last of the men from the smoking-room had exchanged tobacco for bed, the servants had fast closed and barred the house—the new Hall was asleep.

The strange secretary sat in the small, well-furnished room that had been allotted to him, his red head resting upon his hands, and the rusty keys lying on the leather-covered writing-table before him.

"All asleep, or quiet by this time, and now to my task. Strange to what uses time and circumstances—who would have thought that I should have turned the spy and supposed tool of Reginald

Dartmouth!" he murmured, with a sad but meaning smile.

Calming himself, the strange youth smoothed his red hair over his forehead, settled his spectacles, and took up a small hand lamp, which was standing on the table.

Turning the flame down till it looked no larger than a star, he stole on tip-toe from the room and stood in the grand corridor, listening intently.

After ascertaining that all was quiet he proceeded in the direction of Reginald Dartmouth's apartments, shielding the lamp with his small hands so that it should not be extinguished.

Captain Dartmouth's apartments lay to the right; facing the door of the ante-chamber rose the narrow flight of stairs leading to the upper storey, consisting of rooms used for lumber, and remaining in the same condition as when the old Squire was alive.

The great extension of the old mansion by additional wings had rendered them superfluous and the captain had had them locked up and left untouched.

These the secretary was to explore to-night, for a means of communication with and observation of the boudoir of the Countess.

At the first bend of the stairs the fresh paint and gilding ceased, and the dim light of the turned-down lamp fell upon bare boards and worm-eaten balustrades.

At the first landing a number of chests, rolls of carpet, and bundles of odd litter threatened to stop the way; but as noiselessly as ever the midnight explorer climbed over all obstructions and paused before two doors.

There was no look of hesitation or curiosity upon his face, as one would expect to see on that of a stranger in a fresh place. On the contrary, a strange look of recognition and familiarity crossed it, and with a deep sigh he turned over the keys, looking for the one belonging to the first door.

He found it almost directly, and without the preliminary of a trial unfasted the heavy door, and opening it carefully, so that it should not creak, passed into the room.

Here again were old lumber, dust, and neglect. Holding the lamp above his head, the secretary looked round, and, stifling the sigh again, made his way to a cupboard at the farther end.

"Soh!" he murmured, "this should be over the Countess's boudoir. Now to ascertain if aught can be heard or seen."

Leaving the lamp outside, he entered the cupboard, and kneeling down examined the boards carefully.

Then he ventured to sound them, tapping them lightly with his forefinger.

They gave forth a hollow sound that seemed to satisfy him, for with an exclamation of pleasure he rose from his knees and returned for the lamp.

After an examination of the worm-eaten boards he went back into the room, and, searching amongst the lumber, found an old stair rod.

Armed with this he set to work at the middle boards, and using the strong piece of brass as a lever succeeded in raising the board a few inches.

As he did so a gleam of light penetrated through the darkness and the hum of voices reached him.

With a sigh and a strange hesitation the secretary bent his ear to the opening, murmuring:—

"Let me not forget my purpose. I do this not for you, but for justice, Reginald Dartmouth!"

After a few moments he grew accustomed to the low tone of the speakers and caught every word, recognizing the voices of the Count and the Countess.

The Count was speaking, and in a supplicating tone.

"Lucille, let me implore you! Think how much this man can help us. Remember how much we need help. Our lives are pledged to Italy. I would give mine gladly. Can you refuse, can you hesitate to make this sacrifice? Nay, why should I call it by so hard and



unpalatable a name! He is young, handsome, and, ah! how rich—"

The Countess interrupted him with a sigh that was profound enough to reach the attentive ears above.

"Think not I forget. I remember all this, and more," she said, in her musical voice, and with a deep melancholy. "How should I forget when you do not fail to remind me nightly! You ask almost too much!"

The Count paced the floor hurriedly.

"Do you imagine it costs me nothing, thus arguing, Lucille!" he asked, brokenly. "Do you think I do not partake of the sacrifice I ask you to make? Is it nothing to me that you should have to leave me? Is it nothing to me that I should be compelled to urge a Vitzarelli to wed an ignoble Englishman? Oh, Lucille, I tell you it cuts me to the heart; if I could save myself and you this thing by giving even my life I would lay it down gladly."

The Countess sighed, and, from the sound, had risen and walked to his side.

"I know it, I know it. But—ah!—but the pain is greater with me. I do not love him."

The Count turned sharply.

"Do you love any other?" he asked.

"Can you ask?" she replied, with a significance that made the listener start. "Can one without a heart love? Can I, who live for one thing only save Italy, find a particle of soul for love? Oh, you forget, sir, that my life is wrapped up in one aim, in one object, one longing—you forget!"

"No, no, Lucille," replied the Count, hurriedly. "I do not; but I had hoped that—that the purpose had died out—expired—"

"Expired!" interrupted the Countess, with fiery energy. "Not till I shall expire. Died out! It grows stronger each day. I cannot rest, least of all love, till I find her."

"Her!" almost cried the excited listener, springing to his feet with forgetful indiscretion. "Her! Is the Countess's mystery a woman?"

"What is that?" exclaimed the Countess; "I heard a noise."

The listener, brought back to the force of the situation and the danger arising from his involuntary movement and exclamation, dropped down again and remained breathless and motionless.

"A noise up above!" said the Count. "Do not look so alarmed. The house is old. It was the rustling of the wind or the rats."

"No; it sounded like a man's voice and the movement of feet," rejoined the Countess, slowly, and the listener could tell that she too was listening.

"Tis nothing, Lucille. You are tired, too tired to listen to me to night. I will go. Good-night! Heaven bless you!"

There was a dead silence, broken only by the sound of the Count's footsteps as he left the room and walked to his own apartment.

The secretary rose to his feet and pushed the hair from his forehead, keeping his hand upon his puzzled brow.

"More mystery. Where is it all to end? For whom is the Countess looking? What is the purpose which fills up her life and prevents her loving? Shall I do my master's bidding and find it out? No. What good will it do me? how far would it help my purpose? Ah! who knows! 'Link within link' they say; through this Countess I may reach Reginald Dartmouth. Yes, I will do his bidding."

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

MORE inscrutable than ever, John Stanfield sat at his table the next morning, writing with the same monotonous rapidity as if the past night had been nothing more than a dream.

The Hall was wide awake and the sumptuous breakfast was going on, the hum of the voices, sometimes the ripple of laughter, floated up to the small room and reached the silent secretary.

Presently footsteps were heard ascending the stairs and Reginald Dartmouth entered.

The secretary did not look up—wrote on, to all appearance deaf and dumb.

"Well," said his master, closing the door after him and standing opposite the still figure. "Well, what have you done?"

John Stanfield looked up, pen still in hand.

"I have answered half the letters, and marked those about which I have to make farther inquiries."

Reginald Dartmouth frowned.

"I did not ask you that," he said, sternly. "What have you done towards the work I gave you yesterday?"

"But little," replied the secretary. "There has been but little time."

His master frowned again.

"Were you watching yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Did you see nothing—note nothing?"

"I saw and noted. I did more. Last night I visited the rooms above and discovered—"

"Yes—yes—what?" said Reginald Dartmouth, with a burst of impatience utterly unlike his usual calm composure.

The secretary's eyes flashed behind the dark spectacles.

"Enough to mark the course."

"And that is all?" asked Reginald Dartmouth, impatiently. "Did you learn nothing tangible?"

"Nothing," replied the secretary. "As you will remember, the time was short, and I had no clue. With longer time and clearer clue much may be done."

Reginald Dartmouth fixed his piercing eyes upon the inscrutable face.

"You have learnt your trade in a deep school," he said. "What have you discovered?"

"That the Countess Vitzarelli," replied the secretary, as monotonously and calmly as before, "has a mystery."

"That I knew already."

"And that the mystery has to do with a woman."

"A woman?"

The secretary nodded.

"Are you certain of that much?"

"I am, quite certain."

Reginald Dartmouth sank into the chair beside the table and leant his head upon his hand.

"No time must be lost. I must know this secret. How did you learn this?"

"By listening to a conversation between the Countess Vitzarelli and the Count."

"Ay, and how?"

"From the room above the Countess's boudoir."

"Ah!" exclaimed Reginald Dartmouth, with an eagerness he tried in vain to conceal. "You have done well and cleverly. You need not doubt your reward. You heard—"

"Nothing, save broken pieces of a conversation, but enough to convince me that a woman is at the heart of this matter."

"Well, and the next step? I leave the matter to you. I have too much on my hands to give attention to it. You understand me? What is the next step?"

"London," replied the secretary.

"London! When do you wish to go?"

"To-morrow, to-night—perhaps to-day, as circumstances may guide me," said the secretary, curtly.

"Good," said Reginald Dartmouth. "Spare neither time nor money. Go to London—to Africa—Asia—where you will—but solve this mystery for me. I trust you. Do not play me false."

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TAKING into consideration the beneficial results of Sir Charles Anderson's accident, it was rather a pity that he had not broken his arm and brought about a low fever some few years earlier.

He was quite a changed man, haggard still and a little paler than ever, but with something of the old recklessness gone, and a sobered, more settled expression upon his handsome face.

The fact was, Sir Charles Anderson, during all the mad tear of his reckless life, had never had

time to think, until the old racer had pitched him head foremost over the winning hurdle and sent him to the Warren maimed, bruised, and senseless.

There, in the quiet, sweet-scented chamber he had had leisure and to spare to look over the long vista of wasted years, to mourn over them, and to vow with a most fervent spirit to bury them out of sight and turn over a new leaf.

It is very likely that this resolution would have vanished into thin air when the old strength came back to his limbs, but a certain something indefinable and nameless left it green and fresh in his heart.

Nameless, we say, but Sir Charles had already in a vague way connected the stability of the resolution with the sweet, patient face of his good little cousin, Rebecca Goodman, and it was a real regret to him when the morning came for him to hold her hand in his own and say "farewell."

"Good-bye, Rebecca; that is if you are still resolute as to my not coming over to see you."

"Yes, Charlie," she said, looking away from his kindly and somewhat anxious eyes. "I think it would be best. You know how slight a thread we hold. Let him be but suspicious," and her face grew sad and grave, "and that thread would be snapped."

"Well, I dare say you are right, Rebecca," sighed Sir Charles, still with the hand in his. "And I am to go and stay there picking up all I can—playing amateur detective in fact."

"I don't ask you—" said Rebecca.

"No, no, I know," interrupted the young baronet, eagerly. "You don't ask me, but you have promised to let me help you in this bitter business, and your wishes are more than law to me."

"Do not forget my greater wish then," murmured Rebecca, earnestly.

"Rebecca," replied Sir Charles, gazing at her with his deep brown eyes earnestly, almost imploringly, "look at me. I tell you I am utterly changed—changed for good, thanks to you and the Warren; I am on a new track, and I promise you that I will not run off it."

"I believe you, Charlie," she said. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," he said, then, after a false start, came back.

"One thing more," he said, in a low voice.

"Supposing I discover anything—something slight or important, that you ought to know—how shall I communicate with you? I must not see you, you say."

Rebecca thought a moment.

"Send a letter with a bouquet of flowers by one of the servants—by that quiet red-haired clerk; he sometimes gossips with Mrs. Lucaa."

"Ah, he is a new arrival, I have not seen him; but all right, I will do so. Good-bye, Rebecca, once more."

Reginald Dartmouth had been informed of his friend's recovery, and had offered to send a carriage to fetch him back to the Hall, but Sir Charles had sent word that he should prefer to walk, and so he came upon the terrace without warning, surprising a group consisting of the Duchess, the Countess, Sir Bois, and Reginald Dartmouth. They all looked up, and greeted him warmly, Reginald Dartmouth holding him by the hand and shaking it with most unusual ardour.

He manifested so much affection indeed that poor Sir Charles felt dreadfully uncomfortable, and shifted on one side uneasily with a natural repugnance to listening to the protestations of friendship from the man he had good reason for suspecting of a dark and fearful crime.

"Oh, I'm all right again, thanks," he said, as cordially as he could, vowing to himself as he spoke that he would seize the first opportunity to return to town. "I'm all right again. How are you? Don't look quite the thing."

This was true, for every day one slight line or other grew upon the schemer's face, and in unguarded moments displayed itself.

"I! Oh, I am perfectly well, I assure you," replied Reginald Dartmouth, with a sudden dash of reserve, "perfectly, and very glad to see you back. Only half an hour ago we were wishing you were amongst us."

"Oh, that is only natural," retorted Sir Charles, with a touch of his old humour. "I am always missed, am I not, your grace?"

"Yes, always, my dear Sir Charles."

"And how have you fared, Sir Charles?" asked the Duchess, who seemed to be in a conversational mood that morning. "How have you fared at the ogre's castle?"

"Ogre's castle!" repeated Sir Charles, echoing her grace's laugh, but not looking very pleased at the witticism. "If you mean at the Warren, most excellently I assure you. I never knew ogre softer handed or more kindly minded."

"Dear me," responded her grace, opening her eyes to the widest extent. "Why, my dear captain—that was the style in which she was always good enough to allude to the host—"my dear captain gave me to understand that Miss Goodman was a very terrible sort of person, an old maid, stern and dragon like."

Sir Charles found that many of the visitors had taken their departure, and the Duchess and the Vitzarelli intended leaving the Dale in a few days.

This he learned during dinner, and at once made up his mind upon a slight plan for getting a further clue to the mystery which had been half revealed to him by Rebecca.

Hour by hour that evening he grew more disquieted and restless.

He could not keep his eyes from wandering round the splendour of the grand drawing-room, and revolving almost unconsciously within his brain the story which Rebecca had so vividly communicated to him.

Was it possible, he asked himself, that all this magnificence, all this wealth, in reality belonged to another than the present holder, and that the calm, cold, inscrutable man leaning over the fauteuil at the other end of the saloon with a face serene and careless could be—what Rebecca had more than hinted?

Frank, open-hearted Sir Charles wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead, and, as if to dispel his thoughts, walked into the billiard-room, where a gay party were playing a match, and talking and laughing with that unreserved spirit which men learn nowhere so well as in their smoking and billiard rooms.

Here he took part in a game, and having won, strolled back into the drawing-room, as if unable to keep away from the mysterious being he was set to watch.

The Countess had risen from her seat, and was going, leaning on Reginald's arm, towards a small chess table, which a couple of footmen were arranging in a small alcove.

"Chess, eh?" said Sir Charles, leaning against the gilt cornice of the recess. "Shall I disturb if I play spectator for a moment or so?"

"I shall only be too honoured," said the Countess, "and I don't think it will make Captain Dartmouth nervous."

"No—not at all. Come and sit down, Charlie," said Reginald Dartmouth.

"No, thanks, I'd rather lean here, I think, it's a comfortable corner, and I can see the battle well."

But he did not watch the game, for after a few minutes he found his thoughts straying back to the horrible topic again, and his eyes riveted to the downcast face of the man opposite him.

Then in a pause of the game he woke from a sort of reverie with a start, looked round the room, and, seeing that the remainder of the group were too far apart to hear or see anything that might go on in the recess, strolled away towards the library.

Presently he came back, and took up his old place with a handsomely bound book in his hand.

Reginald Dartmouth looked up with a cold, keen smile.

"Turned student, Charlie? It is not often I have seen you with a book in your hand. What is it—volume of Balzac?"

"No, a County History," replied Sir Charles, without looking up.

"A County History," repeated the Countess, looking up. "What county?"

"This county," replied Sir Charles, glancing at the calm, set face of Reginald Dartmouth.

"How strange! What a wonderful people you are, Sir Charles. You are great indeed. A history of each county! Poor little Italy! how small, how insignificant she seems when compared to your marvellous little island! History of a county!"

"Yes, and something more even than that, your ladyship—a history of every house of any note within it."

The beautiful Countess nodded.

"Does it give a history of the new Hall?" she asked, dreamily.

"No, that was not built, you know. Our friend Reginald had not waved his wand when this book was written. But it gives a description and full account of the old Dale, upon which this magnificent palace stands—eh, Reg?"

"Yes," said Reginald Dartmouth, almost curtly, "It is your ladyship's move."

They turned to the table, and the baronet went on with his book.

Presently Reginald Dartmouth's smooth tones broke the stillness of the corner.

"You win in everything, Countess; the game is yours. Oh, believe me, I am no fitting opponent for your skill!"

The Countess laughed, but rather absently, as if her thoughts were far away, and leaning her sweet face on one beautifully chiselled arm turned to the silent figure behind her.

"Well, Sir Charles, do you find the old history interesting?"

"Very," said Sir Charles, looking up, "extremely so."

Then he glanced over at Reginald Dartmouth. "There is a very full description of the old Dale, Reg. Did you ever read it?"

"Yes," was the reply, almost as curtly as before.

"It must have been a fine old place if the account of it is correct. I should like to have seen it. A grand old mansion. You have not left much trace of it, Reg?"

"No, the architects did their work well," replied the master of the new Hall, with a strange smile. "There is not much left of the old Dale."

"It is almost a pity—forgive my saying so—but I am fond of the old and picturesque, are not you, Countess?"

"Yes," said the Countess, bringing her eyes from an absent, far-gazing look to his face.

"I cannot think of the old terraces, the old gables, and the rustic entrance-halls without a sigh. You might have spared some of them, Reg. You might even," he added, more slowly, and holding the book open with his thumb, while he fixed his dark frank eyes upon the downcast expression of Reginald Dartmouth's face as he sat toying with a massively carved chessman between his long lithe fingers—"you might even have spared the old well—"

A sudden pallor, a sharp click, and the costly chessman fell on the board, rolling thence to the floor, in two pieces.

The Countess uttered an exclamation and started. Sir Charles, without taking his eyes from the stern face opposite him, but having grown a trifle paler, said, with surprise,—

"Hullo! broken the chessman, Reg? You must have strong fingers. What is the matter? You are quite pale."

"A slight headache," muttered the master of the new Hall, rising with the shadow of a shudder as he spoke that was not so slight but the keen eyes noted it. "Countess, you must feel faint for want of refreshment. Let me take you to have some tea."

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

SIR CHARLES was a great favourite with all the servants both at the Warren and at the new Hall.

His was just that frank, amiable and genial nature to commend itself to their love; they liked to hear his cheery voice and were never afraid of getting a harsh word or an oath from him, for he was a perfect gentleman and would as soon have sworn at a lady as bully his valet or curse his groom.

Held in this esteem, Sir Charles had little cause to fear a refusal when he sauntered into the conservatories early the next morning and asked the gardener "if he would be so kind as to make him up a small bouquet."

"Certainly, sir, certainly," responded the gardener, promptly; he was a new man like the rest of the servants, but a very clever fellow and an honest one to boot. "I am very glad to see you back again and looking so well, Sir Charles," he ventured to say, respectfully.

"Thank you, Thompson, thank you," replied Sir Charles, genially. "Yes, I'm glad to pull round too." Then with his hands in his pockets he strolled down the long avenue, admiring as he proceeded. "That's a fine plant—splendid. One of your own introduction!"

"Yes, sir," replied the man, with a flush of pleasure, taking a knife from his pocket and opening a drawer for a flower paper in which to fold the bouquet. "Yes, sir, and it's a beauty if I may say so."

"Yes, I haven't seen a finer one. I forget if Captain Dartmouth cares much for this sort of thing?"

"Well, he doesn't come in here much, sir," replied the man, with a half-sigh—servants find their work hard and ungrateful if their master takes no interest in it—"but the ladies walk through very often—the Countess Vitzarelli nearly every morning. By the way, it is nearly her time."

"Oh, comes through regularly, does she?" nodded Sir Charles.

"Yes, sir, every morning near about ten o'clock. I generally manage to be here in case she should ask any questions—which she does sometimes, such as the name of a rare plant, and so on."

"Ah, I see," said Sir Charles. "That's a pretty fellow. Put one or two of his blossoms in, will you?"

"Certainly, sir, certainly, sir," said the gardener, quickly adding: "Perhaps you'd like to take the knife and cut one or two that take your fancy yourself, sir?"

Sir Charles knew that this was a gracious privilege, and with another "Thank you" took the knife, and, followed by the man, who received them as he cut them, chose a few rare blossoms and then left the remainder to the gardener's skilled hands.

In a few minutes a handsome bouquet was arranged and tied up, and with this in his hand Sir Charles prepared to depart.

At the door, however, he turned and said, as if he had suddenly remembered it:

"By the way, Thompson, haven't you a new arrival since I have been away?"

"No, sir," replied the man, wiping his knife, "not unless you mean the secretary, Mr. Stanfield."

"Yes, I do," said Sir Charles. "Where is he? I wanted him to be kind enough to take this up to the Warren when he was passing that way."

"He's in London, I believe, sir," replied Thompson. "But I can send the bouquet up to the Warren, sir, by one of my men, or I am going that way myself in the course of the morning."

"Ah, thank you, then I think I will trouble you so far," said Sir Charles. "Secretary up in London, do you say? Are you sure? I thought he never left the Hall!"

"No more he haven't, sir, until now. He's almost like a machine. Gets up at such an hour—so they say up at the house—writes for so long, then takes a turn on the terrace, then goes into the study again and writes for so much longer, then gets his luncheon taken in to him, and takes a stroll afterwards, generally through here or round the forcing beds. Oh, quite like a clock, sir," and the man laughed in a quiet, respectful way. "Indeed some of our men do say they time themselves by his walks."

"Rather a curiosity," said Sir Charles, leaning against the post of the door and taking out his cigar-case, entirely forgetting that tobacco had been forbidden him until the evening. "Quite a curiosity. And what sort of a gentleman is he?—talkative?"



"Bless you, sir," replied the gardener, delighted with Sir Charles's affability and trimming the leaves from a plant as he spoke. "Bless you, sir, never see such a silent, solemn young man in my life. Excepting a good-morning or good-evening, as the case may be, he never opens his mouth. Always thinking, thinking, with his hands behind him and his spectacles bent on the ground. They do say up at the house that he is very clever, but, of course, I don't know."

"Very difficult to know whether a man's clever or not if he says nothing more than good-morning, eh?" said Sir Charles, with his pleasant laugh. "Well I'm curious to see him. Good-morning, Thompson, and thanks for the flowers."

And Sir Charles strolled away.

Now there was nothing particularly culpable in being possessed of a beautiful nosegay, but, seeing a bevy of ladies on the terrace, Sir Charles, with a sudden flush of colour that made his haggard face look exceedingly handsome, put the bouquet behind him, and then, as if still fearful it might be seen, turned down an alley in the shrubbery and made his way back to the house.

After breakfast, as Thompson was putting on his coat preparatory to a walk, Sir Charles re-entered the conservatory, and looking round in a careless way to see that the coast was clear, said:

"Here's the bouquet, Thompson; if you are going up to the Warren perhaps you will take it to Miss Goodman with my compliments—if you are not I will stroll up with it myself as I should not like one of your men to crush it."

"Oh, I'm going that way, sir," said the man, promptly. "It'll be safe with me, sir; a man don't spoil his own work."

The baronet watched him till he got clear of the terrace and upon the high road, then turned back with a shrug of the shoulders, muttering,—

"Perhaps if Master Thompson guessed there was something else there besides his flowers he mightn't feel so flattered."

And the "something else" was a letter of great importance to this story.

"MY DEAR REBECCA,

"This is the first letter I have written to you since one indited some ten years back, which if I remember rightly contained principally—and solely I am afraid—a modest request for a ten-pound note. I feel this morning that I ought to have taken that old foggy Toddy's advice and remained in the quiet seclusion of the sick-room a day or two longer. That is to say I have spent so restless and unsatisfactory a night as to be reminded that I am not in good training as yet."

"Seriously, my dear Rebecca—for I feel that this attempt at light-heartedness is out of place—I feel most terribly miserable. I wish sincerely that there was no such person as Reginald Dartmouth, and no such place as this New Hall."

"I seem scarcely able to breathe with the dread and horror of this thing. What you must have endured with the constant, never-ceasing nightmare continually with you night and day, since the old man's death, must be indescribable."

"Great Heaven! it is fearful, incredible! And at present I see no way out of it all."

"Were it not for your wish, I would not stay here another moment; but for once I must serve the cause of justice, and hold myself ready to follow your directions."

"These expressions will naturally prepare you for what I have to tell. Last night—tormented by the suspicions your story had filled me with—I devised a plan whereby I might get some sort of clue to the truth of your terrible fears. Rebecca, I am almost certain you are right. To be brief, during a quiet moment or two in the drawing-room while no one was near us save the Countess, I got into conversation with Reginald upon the old Dale, and with intentional suddenness mentioned the old well, watching his face intently."

"It changed—nay, he changed, shrank and quailed to such an extent that in an effort to recover his usual calmness he broke between his finger and thumb a massive ivory chessman, which

I could not, if paid ten thousand pounds for the feat, break with my two hands."

"Of course he lost his presence of mind only for a moment, but I saw enough to confirm my worst fears."

"What my night has been I cannot describe to you. I will only remind you that for long years I have called this man friend. 'Tis true I always knew him to have no heart, and scarcely gave him credit for conscience but he was my friend, and this sudden revelation of his true character has been nothing more or less than a shock to me."

"I hasten to let you know the result of my test—scarcely knowing whether I am doing right in so doing. The bouquet in which I have enclosed this—I trust securely—will be brought to you by the gardener, an unsuspicious and honest fellow. If you have any message, written or otherwise, you need not fear to entrust it to him."

"I am a bad letter-writer, Rebecca, but you will believe me that, though I cannot express my gratitude any better on paper than I have done in words, my sense of your kindness, gentleness and goodness grows clearer each moment."

"Ever yours, "C."

"P.S.—I have omitted to say that the secretary is away, in London. He seems a strange character from what I can hear, and I am almost convinced—though why I could scarcely say—that he is in some way a part and parcel of this fearful mystery—perhaps a tool of R. D's. I leave him and all else, my dear Rebecca, to your keener comprehension."

#### CHAPTER XL.

It was the last ball of the season at the new Hall.

On the morrow the guests who had been enjoying its hospitality were to take unto themselves wings and fly to fresh fields and pastures new.

The great saloon was all ablaze with light, and well filled with a gay throng, while first and foremost amongst the ladies was the tall and graceful form of the Countess Vitzarelli.

Attired in a magnificent costume of pearl gray satin, dotted with sprays of frosted silver and glistening with precious stones that with every rise and fall of her perfectly-moulded bust shot out innumerable scintillations of dazzling light, her glorious hair bound round in one massive Ionic coil, and shining in the brilliant atmosphere like satin, and her dark, lustrous, yet mournful eyes gazing dreamily around her with a look of calm meditation, she did indeed seem the impersonation of all that was goddess-like and beautiful.

At least, so thought all the men, and specially Reginald Dartmouth.

To him she was the one thing to be ardently desired—the one thing at the present to thirst after, to scheme and plot for.

Rather late appeared Count Vitzarelli who passed through the maze of dancers till he reached the side of the host.

The Count had honoured this ball because it was the last.

Usually he remained in his rooms during festivities, busily engaged morning, noon, and night in receiving and answering the despatches which came sometimes by the ordinary post but more frequently by special messengers.

This night, however, being the last ball, he had come down from his room, and condescended in an abstracted but still charming manner to exchange politenesses with the gay triflers.

There was always a certain reserve in the Count's manner when in the presence of Reginald Dartmouth; to-night, however, something of the reserve had vanished, and there was a sparkle in the small, sharp eyes that told of unusual excitement and pleasure.

"Well, my dear Count, you have honoured us," said Reginald Dartmouth.

"Yes,"

Then, throwing off all courteous ceremony, he drew his arm through Reginald Dartmouth's and led him gently but hurriedly away to the colonnade.

"The first despatch has arrived."

"Yes," said Reginald Dartmouth, with quiet self-possession.

The Count looked irritated by his coldness and, with an impatient gesture, went on speaking in Italian and almost pettishly,—

"It is a glorious success! Our schemes have prospered—the day will be ours! I am waiting—in a fever—for another messenger. This atmosphere, this music, the whole scene stifles and maddens me. I am eaten up with expectation—surprise. Santa Maria! my dear Dartmouth, how do you bear it?" and he gazed with irritable astonishment at the serene face above him.

"I enjoy it," was the almost contemptuous reply. "I am not like you, alas! my dear Count, hot-blooded and, shall I say, excitable! The music calms and soothes me, the atmosphere of the flowers, the lights, nay the merry dance, give me naught but pleasure."

The Count looked up eagerly to glean from the face what the tone of sarcasm hinted at, but he was unsuccessful.

The face revealed nothing of the emotion within.

"Ah!" he said, with a sharp sigh, "you have nothing—a mere bagatelle—on this cast. With me it is a matter of life—"

At that moment the graceful form of the Countess swept by them, and, as she replied to Reginald Dartmouth's respectful salutation with a smile, he turned white, and, clutching the Count's arm with a grip of steel, hissed, as though the words were forced from him,—

"And I have more than life!"

The Count dropped his arm with a low cry of pain and looked up, but the time necessary for the gesture had been sufficient for Reginald Dartmouth to recover his composure again, and his dark, impassable eyes met the Count's with a calm regard.

"Enough, Count. Do not suppose the game is naught to me because the cards do not shake in my trembling hands. I play to lose or win, and my stake is heavier—ay, heavier than yours." And with a significant smile he looked in the direction the Countess had gone.

Before the Count could reply he continued,—

"Has the Countess been informed of this news?"

"No," said the Count. "I am going now to find her."

"She has just passed," said Reginald Dartmouth. "Count, I ask you a favour. Let me be the happy individual to acquaint her with the good tidings."

The Count nodded.

"As you will," he said; then with a smile added, "had you not better wait until the second despatch—for which I fervently pray—arrives?"

"I think not," returned Reginald Dartmouth, with a sinister smile that caused the Count to start. "I think not, Count; the opportunity is now, as your great poet says. The next despatch may be unfavourable."

"Ah!" breathed the Count. "You are determined to have her. Captain Dartmouth should have said he played to win only," and he smiled sternly.

"I bow to your lordship's correction," returned Reginald Dartmouth, with keen sarcasm, then with a bow and a smile he walked away, taking the direction in which the Countess had gone.

She met him with an inquiry for Vitzarelli.

"I have but just come from him," he said, standing over her and gazing into her downcast eyes with a passionate regard. "I come from him commissioned to bring you good news—of Italy."

She looked up.

"But, Countess, he continued, quickly, "for once let me lay it aside."

She looked at him questioningly, and his keen eyes noted that her face grew whiter and that her lips quivered.

"Countess," he went on, more slowly, and with that low-toned voice that is hushed by fierce passion and acts as a charm upon the heart to which it pleads.

"For months, nay, since the moment I first saw you I have loved you with all my heart and soul. Not as other men—Lucille—not as other

men, but with all my heart and soul. I would die for you this hour, nay, I would live in unending torture for the least part of your priceless heart. Lucille, if I speak wildly, think how madly I love. If I can do naught but tell you that one thing, remember how long my tongue has been silent, and forgive me for being bewildered and dazed by the intensity of my passion. Lucille, speak to me but one word—one word I pray you. I do not value life without you. Give me one look to save me from madness and death."

The deep, almost grand intensity he threw into the last word caused her to start and echo it faintly.

"Speak, speak, Lucille—speak!" he implored, breaking into these thoughts and scattering them to the winds.

A troubled shade passed over her face, but with an effort the beautiful woman gathered strength, and repressing a shudder that at the moment threatened to quiver through her whole frame, murmured, brokenly:

"Let it be as you wish."

In an instant he had covered her hands with kisses and the next caught her to his breast.

The last waltz had been danced, the string and brass instruments were still, the footfalls on the polished inlaid floor of the great saloon had all died away, the lights were being quickly extinguished by the wearied retainers, and the dancers had retired to rest.

It was all still—not a voice save that of the nightingale to be heard, but occasionally the slow footfall of a dark figure pacing the broad stone walk with thoughtful mien yet impatient eyes fixed on the low French window of the small antechamber broke the silence and rendered it yet more solemn.

At last, when the slow step had changed to an impatiently rapid one, the window was quietly opened, and the figure of a woman stepped on to the walk. Reginald Dartmouth sprang forward with a loud cry, and caught the hand clasping the shawl.

"Lucille! at last! How long the minutes have seemed. What has kept you! But no, rather how gracious, how sweet of you to come." And in his tenderest manner he led her to one of the stone seats, throwing over it his capacious cloak and wrapping it round her with anxious solicitude.

It was some time before the Countess spoke, then she said with a burst of passion for which Reginald was unprepared,—

"You say you love me, but first listen to me; there is a barrier between us which may separate us for all time. I am pledged to a solemn purpose, to give my time, my strength, nay life itself to its accomplishment."

"You mean the cause of Italy," answered Reginald, "and you know that I am with you heart and soul."

The beautiful woman shook her head.

"Listen," she cried eagerly, "and I will tell you all; you shall not be deceived. I am the Countess Vitzarelli now, but my childhood was passed in shame and poverty. My father deserted my mother and she died of hardships and disease, leaving me and my sister alone to battle with the world she had found so cruel. Before my mother left us she gave me a solemn charge. Taking my arm she raised herself and placing my sister's hand in mine bade me, if I would hope to meet her in the world to which she was speeding, to watch over the little one, guard her, keep her, and—oh, Heaven—to snatch her, even by death, from the chance of dishonour. I promised, nay, swore to do so, and with my oath ringing in her ears my mother died."

For a few moments there followed a dead silence. Then, in a strained voice, and speaking as if with difficulty, Lucille went on,—

"We buried our mother, and, hand in hand, journeyed on alone. We lived by such chance charity as fell to us from the passers-by. When that failed I learned to dance, and danced in the streets for the bread that could not be bought with tears. My sister—she whom I had sworn to guard—was never out of my sight until one fatal day we reached Paris. There we were parted. Oh, do not speak! Let me go on or I

shall die! We were parted. I had gone to buy bread. My sister, tired of waiting beside the door, strayed from my sight. I lost her. For weeks I sought for her through that cursed city, and at last learnt that she had gone, fled—lured by some black heart to the shame I had sworn to guard her from. Then, when the news reached me, I swore to know no peace, to know no love till I found her and avenged her. I went to Rome, found my uncle, was seized by him and detained to play a hollow part at court, after he had obtained a decree giving me the right to style myself Countess Vitzarelli, and for years, with my oath repeated daily, was forced to relinquish the search.

"One night I dreamed my sister was dead. They told me it was but a dream, but I knew that it was true, as well as if I had heard her last breath. Then my oath changed. I swore I would find the demon who had ruined her. Years rolled on, and my purpose failed. I, who had sworn never to love, loved at last. Nay, do not start. It was but my country, Italy. I gave myself to the cause and forgot—oh, heaven forgive me—my sister.

"But it was but for a time. Suddenly the old desire sprang to life and the oath grew upon me. Lately the remembrance of my oath to our dying mother has become more vivid, and now"—and as she spoke she rose and clenched her hand to her bosom—"and now I am filled with one desire, that of avenging my sister's death!"

Reginald Dartmouth pressed his hand to his brow and looked slowly round.

"Lucille," he said, hoarsely, "I know now what stands between you and my love, and here with Heaven's light upon us both I take your oath as mine."

She started and held out her hand.

He seized it and pressed it to his lips.

"Lucille, I take this as my gage. Give me some clue and I will win your love by giving you your revenge."

She gazed at him for a moment, then sank upon a seat.

"You love me still?" she said, with bewildered astonishment.

"Still!—ten thousand times more," he replied, his passion heightened by this new phase of her beauty. "I love you still, and will win your love or die in the attempt. Lucille, give me some clue. Tell me your sister's name."

She shook her head.

"No use, no use. I will do more—show you her face as it was when last I saw it. Here against my bosom I have worn it. See," and she thrust her hand into the bodice of her dress. But suddenly she sprang to her feet white and trembling, and her hands dropped to her side. "Oh, Heaven, it is gone!"

"Gone!" he echoed.

"Yes, gone—lost!" repeated the Countess, sinking on to the seat and covering her face with her hands. "Gone. It has never been from against my heart since we parted. I have worn it night and day!"

"It is in the ball-room—you have dropped it to-night!" he said quickly.

"Let us go at once—at once!" she cried, feverishly.

He drew her arm within his and wrapping the cloak round her walked towards the window.

Before they could reach it, however, a shadow crossed their path, and, starting, Reginald Dartmouth turned his head and saw the slim figure of John Stanfield coming slowly towards them.

With a dark frown he waited till the secretary came up, and said, sternly,—

"What brings you here, sirrah!"

The blue spectacles were raised to his face, still white and agitated, and the slow, monotonous voice said, without the least expression,—

"I have just returned from London, sir, and hearing voices on the terrace feared they might be—"

"You may go; all is safe," said Reginald Dartmouth, impatiently.

And the slouching figure with a formal bow, turned and walked slowly away, not turning round until the window was closed behind them, then with a sudden swiftness he ran back a few paces, stooped and picked up a small glittering

trinket, and, without waiting to glance at it ran lightly down the steps in the direction of his own room.

(To be continued.)

## JULIET THE HEIRESS.

—30—

(Continued from page 489.)

"You are mistaken, Rose," said a voice, which made her heart leap in her bosom. "I was the only one in the house who knew ten minutes ago that we had mismatched a pair of Christian names."

There stood Gerald Graham in the doorway with a colourless face, and a wounded arm in a sling.

At the risk of some damage to his injured arm he had got up from his sick bed on purpose to defend her, and a look of loving gratitude shot from Joanna's eyes to his.

"Gerald, you oughtn't to be here," cried Lady Winstanley, in real alarm. "You naughty boy, why did you get up! Lie down this moment on that sofa. See to him, Rose!"

"I had an idea that my presence was needed here," he said with a smile, as he yielded to physical pressure from Lord Clevedon, and subsided on to the couch. "And, besides, I was all curiosity to see my new cousin."

"Gerald, you are humbugging. You didn't know it," Lady Rose said, in a whisper.

"But I did," looking up into her puzzled face. "Since when—then?"

"Ah! that is my affair, not yours. She naturally confided in me."

"I don't see why," shortly.

"Don't you? I do," he said, emphatically.

## CHAPTER IX.

"JOE, WHY DID YOU DO IT?"

It was the night of the ball, and as carriage after carriage rolled up the avenue in fast recurring succession, a scene like fairyland opened before the eyes of the delighted occupants. The branches of the trees were made into arches of light by the innumerable lamps that were hung on them. And far and wide along the terraces stretched rows of silvery-looking lights marking out the lines of the balustrade, and the whole southern façade of the Abbey. The hall was like a garden of exotics and roses; whilst thousands of Marshal Niels resting on banks of moss adorned the sculptured dado of the ball-room.

The two cousins had a long talk together, for Juliet made Joanna bring her dress into her room, in order that she might as usual share the services of her maid, Nisbet.

Lady Winstanley had told them to slip into tea-gowns for the dinner, which was to be earlier that day, and to make their grand toilettes afterwards; but there was so much to tell that both the cousins were rather late, and to their dismay heard the wheels of the first arrivals before they were nearly ready.

"Just tell me about that nice-looking young Graham," Juliet said hurriedly, whilst Nisbet was busy hanging up dresses in the dressing-room, "he seems very fond of you."

Joanna turned away her face, but she felt obliged to keep nothing back from the cousin who was always so good to her.

"He asked me to marry him, but I refused him."

"You refused him—why?" with wide open eyes.

"I was not going to accept him under false pretences. He thought I was an heiress."

"And when you told him the truth?"

"He only knew it just before you arrived."

"And then he got out of his bed to defend you! I call that a lover worth having!"

"Oh, don't say that!" Joanna cried with trembling lips, "I know it only too well. He is the best man that ever lived, but I've lost him!"



"Nonsense, if he is worth anything he won't be lost. And remember, Joe, I promised my dear father that if you married a nice man, I would settle two thousand a year on you."

"You, dear! I could not live on your charity," tears of gratitude starting to her eyes. "Charity!" Juliet exclaimed, indignantly. "Aren't you my nearest kith and kin?"

"Her ladyship wishes to know if the ladies are ready," a voice said at the door, and in an instant there was a wild scramble.

Joanna looked very nice in white broché, with pearls round her neck and in her hair.

Agitation had brought a becoming flush to her cheeks, and a light to her eyes.

Major Fitzroy groaned as he looked at her, for he began to think he was really in love with her, and he was haunted by the remembrance of the vanished fortune. But when Juliet entered the room in a lovely dress from Kate Reilly, of some diaphanous material which sparkled like a star-studded sky, with the Verreker diamonds blazing on her white neck, on the front of her bodice, and in her golden curls, Lord Windgrove was not the only man who drew a deep breath of admiration. Here was an heiress in whom anybody could believe, and whom Lady Winstanley was only too proud to own as a niece.

"Isn't she perfect, mother?" her son whispered delightedly. "Did I say one word too much?"

And then, without waiting for an answer, he flew across the room to her, determined that nobody should rob him of the first dance.

Joanna had plenty of partners, for those who had met her before had found out that she danced very well. Whilst some still regarded her as the heiress, or at least were glad to make friends with the heiress's cousin.

"Lucky those diamonds were not in the house last night," the Earl remarked to General Grey, "or the burglars would have had a big haul. They did not get much as it was. We were fortunate to catch three—thanks to you and Cleveden—and the fourth, who escaped us, must have been empty handed."

"And no harm done except to your nephew. I was dead against that girl, I confess, but I can't help admiring her pluck."

"A fine character," mused the Earl. "Now if she had been a regular out-and-outer, she would have entrapped one of those men into a marriage before she let out her secret. The Major was very keen after her shekels. Well, and what do you think of your old friend's daughter after all?"

"I should like to marry her myself," the General exclaimed enthusiastically. "Venus isn't in it."

"Lady Rose, we have been fellow-conspirators in a harmless plot," Lord Cleveden said on the lamp-lit terrace, "and though our plot turned out rather differently to what we expected, we may call it pretty successful."

"Yes, as successful as possible," she answered, readily.

"It is usual to celebrate such an event in some sort of way," he went on, as he led her up to the balustrade, and leant over it, looking down into the dewy gardens. "What do you say to celebrating it by a wedding?"

"Windgrove and Juliet's! You are in a hurry!"

"No—yours and mine," he said, softly. "And no one can say I'm in too great a hurry."

Lady Rose's heart throbbed fast with joy in the fragrant silence of the summer's night; but she felt as if she had been struck dumb. He put his arm round her, and drew her gently towards him.

"Rose, do you love me?" No answer, but the next moment he stooped his head, and imprinted a glad kiss upon her willing lips, and she knew for certain that the love she had hidden so carefully was returned.

Joanna, worn out already with the fatigues of the evening after all the conflicting emotions of the day, was resting for a while in a corner of the ball-room, with a partner by her side to whom she was giving scant attention. When Lady Rose and Lord Cleveden came in from the

garden, she saw what had happened in their radiant faces, and looking across the room to where Lord Windgrove was bending devotedly over Juliet Verreker, she could also guess that another courtship was going on towards a successful end. The contrast between their hopes and her own disappointment was very acute, but in spite of that how she would have enjoyed this ball if Gerald had been there to claim his share of her dances, even if she had known that this was to be the last time for ever and ever.

Just then Lord Cleveden came back into the room, and walked straight up to her.

"If you are not too deeply engaged," he said, with a smile, "there is a poor invalid who would be thankful for five minutes' talk. Will you let me escort you to the library?"

He smiled again as he saw the blush which irradiated her face, as she rose at once, and with a hurried bow to her partner, put her hand inside his arm. Her heart was fluttering wildly when he left her in the dimly lighted library, and closed the door behind her, doing to others as he would be done by.

"This is so good of you," Gerald said in his pleasant voice as he got up from the sofa on which he had been lying, and came quickly towards her. "I've been furiously jealous of all the men in there; but now I have got you all to myself, come and let us be cosy."

He led her to the sofa, and sat down by her side, resting his only available arm against the back of it behind her. A great shyness had come over her, and she felt as if she could not possibly raise her eyes to his, whilst every pulse was throbbing with tumultuous joy at the certainty that he was just the same as ever.

"Joe, why did you do it?" he asked, sorrowfully. "It was such a risky thing to attempt, and it might give rise to all sorts of stories against you."

"I know it now; but I never thought of it at the time," she said, falteringly. "I meant to have my fling, just for a week or so, and then go back into my insignificance as if nothing had happened."

"You did not make a good liar," he said, slowly. "Every now and then you could have got out of a scrape by a bold one, but you wouldn't do it. Your own truthful nature stood in your way."

"You believe in my truthful nature after this? Oh, thank Heaven!" she said, fervently.

"You lived a lie, day after day, but you would not tell one. What strange creatures women are! Joe, you will never deceive me again, will you?" he asked, gently.

"I'd die first," she cried, with conviction, and then she let her bouquet of yellow roses fall to the ground as she clasped her hands in almost uncontrollable agitation. "Oh, Gerald, forgive it all before we part for ever! I cannot go away thinking that you hate and despise me!"

"You can't go away! So very glad to hear it," he answered with an amused smile.

"But I am going—going to-morrow, and you will only remember me as the wretch that deceived you," the tears starting to her eyes.

"Shan't I even remember that you saved my life? Is that such a trifle?"

"Oh, that was nothing; anybody would have done the same."

"Some people might have screamed and run away. Rose would have fetched somebody else, but she wouldn't venture near me; meanwhile I should have died. No, you can't get out of it. I owe my life to you, and I'd rather owe it to you than to anybody else in the world. And I'll pay you," smiling as his arm slipped round her neck, "by being as good a husband as I can manage."

"No, no, no!" struggling to free herself. "You would marry me out of gratitude, and I won't have it, not for the world," her eyes flashing.

"I want to marry you simply because I love you more than any other woman on earth," he said earnestly. "and I am going to marry you—Juliet or Joanna—heiress or pauper, simply because I can't do without you. There!"

Then he bent down his head, and his golden moustache swept her lips.

At that very moment the door was thrown open by Major Fitzroy. He had just heard from Juliet Verreker that he was mistaken in thinking that her cousin was poor because she was not known as the heiress, and she had the pleasure of informing him that she would be very comfortably off.

"What a consummate fool I've been!" he exclaimed, "but perhaps I can retrieve my error. Where can I find her?" looking helplessly round the room.

"If you mean Miss Joanna Verreker," Lord Cleveden said with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "you will find her resting in the library."

The Major hurried off at once, imagining that he would have a delicious *tête-à-tête*, but when he saw her sitting by Gerald's side with their two faces in closest juxtaposition, his jaw fell, and his eyes flashed angrily.

Joanna gave a little cry of dismay, and drew back into her corner blushing furiously, but Gerald looked up and said, with a smile,—

"Allow me to introduce you to my future wife."

The Major shut the door, and came forward with a scowl on his rather good-looking face.

"Miss Verreker, you have deceived me most abominably."

"Take care what you say!" exclaimed Graham fiercely, whilst Joanna said quietly,—

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Yes, you do," he said, roughly. "You choked me off with a tale that your fortune was all a myth, and now I hear—and no doubt Graham knows it too—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Graham is not a miserable fortune-hunter like yourself," she interrupted, quickly.

"Does he believe you to be absolutely a pauper?" he asked, with a sneer.

"As to that, I am completely in the dark. Miss Verreker is enough for me without anything else," Gerald said, with quiet dignity.

"If you can afford to live on air, I can't," and with his head in the air the Major beat a hasty retreat, swearing audibly, but under his breath.

The two cousins were married on the same day at Westminster Abbey, and Gerald Graham was just as proud of his bride as Lord Windgrove was of the beautiful heiress.

[THE END.]

THE word "tawdry" comes from St. Audrey. In old times in England fairs were held on St. Audrey's Day, at which dealers often palmed off cheap and worthless goods on people. On this account the explanation "bought at St. Audrey's" soon came to mean that an article was cheap. And after a while the word "tawdry" was evolved out of the phrase.

In the seventeenth century canaries in Britain were chiefly imported from Germany, and were of a green colour. They are now bred in Norwich, Coventry, Derby, Northampton, Nottingham, Glasgow, and some of the manufacturing towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. In many garrets, in which a sedentary employment is pursued by the head of a family at home, the clear notes of the canary rise above the click of the shuttle or the whirr of the sewing-machine. Almost invariably the nest birds are reared by the assiduous care of working men.

WHY people are right-handed has puzzled scientists for a long time. Some explain it as a result of the "survival of the fittest," contending that in warfare those who advanced the right side would, in the long run, be less exposed to fatal wounds. Others have pointed out, however, that the right extremities are used preferentially by other animals—e.g., the monkey and parrot—and refer it to the fact that the left hemisphere receives a freer supply of blood than the right. The excessive weight of the viscera on the right side, shifting the centre of gravity to the right side of the centre of the body, may also have something to do with it. Others, again, who hold the "double brain theory," say that it is the right brain which governs locomotion. On the whole the reason of our being right-handed is still a scientific mystery.

## FACETIÆ.

YOUNG CLUBMAN: "I'm growing a moustache." Old Clubman: "So someone told me."

WELL DISGUISED.—She: "Mr. Footlightedly doesn't look like an actor, does he?" He: "No; and he doesn't act like one either."

SHE: "Oh, George, that horrid Brooks girl saw you kiss me last night." He: "That's all right. She won't say anything. I kissed her, too."

THE ARTIST (exhibiting sketch): "It is the best thing I ever did." The Critic (sympathetically): "Oh, well, you mustn't let that discourage you."

"THERE is but one kind of rock that grows," said the professor. "Can any of you mention it?" "Yes, sir," replied the Irish boy, "the shamrock."

MRS. WEDDE: "So you are to be married?" Miss Unwedde: "Yes, and I want you to tell me which is the luckiest month to be married in." Mrs. W.: "The thirteenth, my dear."

"WHY did Cæsar thrice decline the imperial crown?" demanded the Shakespearian student. "I suppose it was because it was offered to him three times," replied the matter-of-fact man.

"BOBBIE, how many sisters has your new schoolfellow?" "He has one. He tried to stuff me up by saying that he had two half sisters, but he doesn't know that I study fractions."

"AND so, Peter, you spell 'women' with an 'a'!" said the teacher, correcting an exercise. "Please, sir," was the reply, "my papa told mamma only yesterday that women were singular beings."

POOR PAY.—"I'm in a lot of trouble. The landlady says I'll have to settle up or leave." Dead Broke: "Why, you're in great luck, old man. My landlady says I must settle up before I can leave."

BINKS: "Why so gloomy?" JINKS: "My wife let me have the last word in an argument this morning." "What of that?" "That shows she is going to do as she pleases, anyhow."

SCIENTIFIC BARBER: "It is hard to believe that when examined under a microscope the edge of a razor is seen to have teeth like those of a saw." Writhing but sarcastic customer: "Is it?"

HE: "Reggy Fitzjames has become recklessly engaged to any number of girls, but he always gets out of it." She: "With decency?" He: "Oh, yes; he merely has to go and ask their fathers' consent, and it's all over."

YOUNG DOCTOR: "I have been visiting him for a year, but he does not improve. Something must be seriously wrong with his system." Old Doctor: "Isn't it just possible there is something wrong with your system?"

MARK: "That's a very intelligent-looking office-boy of yours." Lane: "He is." Mark: "Does he learn easily?" Lane: "Remarkably so. I have just taught him not to whistle 'After the Ball.'"

SENIOR PARTNER: "One thing I like about our new clerk is that he is reliable. You can always tell what he is going to do next." Junior Partner: "And what is that?" Senior Partner: "Nothing."

SHE: "When I told Maud about our engagement, she said that she really envied me." He: "Certainly; I don't wonder." She: "Yes; she said she would give anything if she could be as easily pleased as I am."

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER: "Have you any canvas-backed ducks?" Market Man: "No, lady, but I have some fine canvas-packed hams. Shall I send you up a pair?" Young housekeeper: "Well, yes, I suppose they'll do."

"So you used to be in business for yourself, eh?" asked the business man. "How does it happen you are looking for employment?" "I guess I wasn't up to business ways," answered the applicant. "Every time I failed I made a failure of it."

"By the way, you remember Miss Krellinger, whom so many of the boys went wild over, don't you?" "Yes, and I used to think she was a girl that deserved a good husband." "Well, I married her." "You? You astonish me."

THE counsel was late in coming into court, and, after waiting a while, the judge said to the prisoner, "What do you suppose your counsel would say in your favour if he came?" "That," said the prisoner, "is what I want to know."

"WHOM do you consider the greatest inventor of the times?" asked one woman. "My husband," she replied, proudly. "Why, I didn't know he ever invented anything." "You should hear the excuses he gives for coming home at two o'clock in the morning."

PAPA: "Don't you think you might get a prize this term if you tried hard?" Small Son: "No use. Sammy Smart takes all the prizes in our school." "Why is that?" "I don't know for sure, but I suppose he's got a papa who knows enough about arithmetic to help him in his sums."

MISS GLADYS (severely): "Bridget, your manners are not good. You should not come into the room so suddenly when Mr. Callalot is passing the evening with me." Bridget (disgusted): "Sudden! And is it sudden you call it, an' me wid me ear to the blessed key-hole a full three-quarters of an hour?"

AT THE CLUB.—The Lieutenant: "You've only got to see her to care for her as much as I do—almost. She is grace itself! Why, the way she swept me a curtsy in the dance was beautiful, really beautiful." The Colonel: "No doubt, no doubt; but the question is, how would she sweep you out a room, my boy?"

MISS PASTELLE: "It's too bad! I love you, and I've promised to marry you, and yet there isn't a bit of romance about it. You have never once saved my life." Adorer: "I haven't, eh? Don't you remember the time you first saw me?" "Yes; I was walking down the avenue, and you passed me on your bicycle." "Yes; I rang the bell for you to get out of the way, didn't I?"

MRS. SMITH: "Yes, my daughter Lucy married a blacksmith, and they have a nice home and are getting on very well. Mary married a butcher, and is very comfortably provided for. Jennie married a farm labourer, and they are happily situated." Mrs. Jones: "And your daughter Gladys?" Mrs. Smith: "Alas! she married a German prince. I send her 5s. per week and some cast-off clothes, and by taking in washing she manages to support the family."

"THE corset has constantly grown in favour among women since it was invented, notwithstanding the prejudice against it in some quarters." So said the female lecturer as she adjusted her skirts. "Yes, indeed," remarked a lady in the audience; "when the corset came, it came to stay." "And it stays," observed another lady. "Of corset it does," chimed in a third. Just here the lecturer opportunely fainted, or the audience would have been "busting" with laughter.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.—"I wanted to ask you something," he said, with a look of much anxiety on his face. "Yes," she replied, as a sudden smile illuminated her countenance. "I know what I am going to say may sound a little silly—" "I don't think it will, George." "Well, your father—" "He likes you very much, George." "Does he? Well, when he came home to-day did he happen to tell what was the winner? I came down in such a hurry that I didn't have time to look at the paper."

A YOUNG woman whose quick wit is responsible for the loss of a number of friends, has just seen another retire from the list. The young man was in a philosophical mood, and remarked, "Self-study is a bad thing." "I shouldn't be surprised," she responded flippantly. "Now, I am sure that if I were to devote time to thinking about myself I should become very narrow-minded." "Oh, yes; you'd probably have to in order to grasp the subject." And for the time he really felt as small as she had pictured him.

"Do you know how to play poker, Augustus?" sternly asked Mrs. Dusenberry, as he faced her at the breakfast table. "No, my dear," replied Augustus, which was strictly true, for he didn't. "What are these things?" she asked as she displayed a few round white, blue and red pieces of ivory. "Those are overcoat buttons, my dear," replied Augustus; "I have to get the holes bored in them. Give them to me." She did, and Augustus cashed them in.

TEACHER: "If your mother should wish to give each one an equal amount of meat, and there should be eight in the family, how many pieces would she cut?" Class: "Eight." Teacher: "Correct. Now each piece would be one-eighth of the whole; remember that." Class: "Yes'm." Teacher: "Suppose each piece were cut again, what would result?" Smart Boy: "Sixteenth." Teacher: "Correct. And if cut again?" Boy: "Thirty seconds." Teacher: "Correct. Now suppose we should cut each of the thirty-two pieces again, what would result?" Little Girl: "Hash."

THE elderly maiden's affections had been wrenched loose by a heartless man, and she sued him for £1,000. When she was in the witness-box she was asked how old she was. "Am I obliged to tell that?" she asked, trembling. "Certainly," said the judge. "Shan't I get the £1,000 unless I do?" she inquired again. "Well, probably not." She gathered her skirts about her, sniffed the air once or twice, and got up. "The hateful, mean thing," she exclaimed. "He can keep his £1,000 if he wants to. I am sure I don't want it," and away she went before anybody could stop her.

MR. UPTON: "Where's my hat?" Mrs. Upton: "I declare I never saw such helpless creatures as men are. Can't move a step without a woman to look after them. A woman can keep track of her own things, the children's, and her husband's, and run a boarding-house besides, while a man can't so much as find his hat without making some poor overworked woman jump up and get it for him. Here's your hat just where you left it when you came in. On your way down town stop at the *Daily News* office and leave this advertisement." "What is it about?" "Rooms and board for gentlemen only."

A STORY is told of the famous pianist Paderewski, that by some means a mother and daughter managed to gain admission to his sanctum. Paderewski listened to the daughter's performance, while the mother beat time approvingly. At last, with a final crash the girl arose from the stool, and the mother, flushed with pleasure, whispered to the artist,—"Tell me, in confidence—what do you think of her?" Amiablely the great artist rubbed his hands together. "I think she must be very charitable." "Charitable! Charitable!" "Yes, charitable," Paderewski sweetly repeated. "Surely she lets not her left hand know what her right hand doeth."

THE young woman sat by the window looking out into the snowy air, dreamily, when her reverie was disturbed by an elderly woman coming in. "Oh," said the visitor, "excuse me. I didn't know you were absorbed." "Come in," responded the dreamer, extending her hand, "I am glad to see you." "But why are you so pensive? You look as if your best friend had died. What is the matter?" The young woman drew her handkerchief hastily across her eyes. "Ah," she sighed, "Harry and I—" The older woman dropped her hands in her lap in a helpless, despairing fashion. "Don't tell me," she interrupted, "that you and Harry have quarrelled?" The girl sighed again. "The end has come," she said, "to all our moonlight drives, to the tender whisperings beneath the magnolia trees, to the boxes of caramels and the baskets of flowers, to the sweet nothings in the conservatory as the dancers whirl in the ball-room, to the verses he wrote me, to the rivalries and jealousies of sweetheart days, to the—" "Say no more," exclaimed the older woman, determined to set matters right, "what have you two done? Tell me everything." The girl came over and laid her head on the other's shoulder. "We were married this morning at ten o'clock," she whispered, and the older woman's hands fell helpless once more.



## SOCIETY.

THE Queen always thoroughly enjoys the companionship of her eldest daughter, whose widowhood and responsible position renders her sympathies with her august mother very keen. The Empress Frederick is a lady of wonderful talent and foresight, and the Queen, as well as the Prince of Wales, have the greatest confidence in her opinion.

At Windsor the Empress Frederick is lodged in the Tapestry Rooms, near the corridor, which are hung with a valuable and very interesting collection of portraits, including the present German Emperor, his father, and his grandfather, and a beautiful picture representing the late Grand Duchess Alice of Hesse, surrounded by her children.

THE Emperor William has informed the Court of his intention to pay another visit to England next summer. The Emperor will come to Cowes in his yacht, as he did last year, arriving on Saturday, August 4th, and he will remain in the Solent for about a week. The Royal Yacht Squadron Regatta is to begin on Tuesday, August 7th, which is a week later than last year.

THE Grand Duchess Xenia is only eighteen, and is, like the daughters of the Princess of Wales, intensely attached to her mother. She is also a great favourite with her father, who calls her the "Philosopher," as she is of studious habit and says many wise things quietly. Grand Duchess Xenia is very amiable and gentle, and fully justifies her name, which means "a gift," as she has been in truth a welcome gift to her parents, to whom she is absolutely devoted.

THE Czarina's devotion to her husband through his last illness has been beyond praise. Weak from recent indisposition herself, and torn with anxiety about one son who was ill at home, and another who is an invalid at a distance, she yet nursed her husband with the skill and unremitting attention of a trained Sister of Mercy. Nor would she leave his side so long as the danger continued, and the doctors had no small difficulty in inducing her even to take rest or sleep herself.

THE Khedive intends to make a tour of the principal European Courts this year, leaving Egypt early in May. Abbas Pasha will visit Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Paris, before coming to London, so he is not likely to arrive in England until the end of June. The Khedive will stay at Buckingham Palace as the guest of the Queen, who is to receive a visit from him at Windsor Castle. A State Ball and a State Concert will be given at the Palace during his stay in London, and probably the date of the Marlborough House garden party will be so fixed that his Highness can attend it.

GARDENS of gold the Queen's Royal flowerbeds at Windsor may now be truly called, for the golden crocuses there are now in their full beauty. The Royal large yellow crocus is an Oriental plant, but its exact locality is unknown; the small yellow crocus is by no means so common as the last, but it grows wild on the hills of Morea. *C. susianus*, or the Queen's Cloth of Gold crocus, is a native of the Crimea, and thousands of bulbs were brought to England by the troops after the war. It takes no less than forty thousand golden crocuses to yield one pound of saffron which, in the days of George III. enjoyed a high repute both as a perfume and as a nerve, stomachic, and narcotic drug.

It is the Queen's intention to travel direct from Florence to Coburg, and to spend several days there during which there will be many festivities in honour of her Majesty's visit, and of the Royal wedding. The German Emperor, the Empress Frederick, and the Prince of Wales will meet the Queen at Coburg, where preparations for the reception of all these august guests are already on foot. As in accordance with German custom, there will be no bridesmaids in our meaning of the word, the young Princesses of Wales will perhaps not be present, although it is quite possible that the Princess of Wales and her unmarried daughters may also be guests on this very interesting occasion.

## STATISTICS.

A LONDON General Omnibus is supposed to earn £19 a week.

AMERICANS eat fifteen million bushels of onions a year.

NATURALISTS claim that a single healthy swallow will devour six thousand grubs every day.

A CATERPILLAR, in the course of a month, will devour 6000 times its weight in food. It takes a man nearly three months to eat a quantity of food equal to his own weight.

## GEMS.

MEDIOCRITY can talk, but it is for genius to observe.

NOW money is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things are want.

THE first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humour, and the fourth wit.

SWEETNESS that never sours will do more to smooth one's pathway through the world than great accumulation of wealth.

WE prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RICE WAFFLES.—To half a pint of rice, boiled soft and mashed very fine, put a tablespoonful of butter. Set it to cool, and just before baking add one egg and half a pint of flour, and one pint of new milk, or better still, half a pint of cream and the same of milk.

RICE CAKE.—Quarter pound of flour, quarter pound butter, quarter pound ground rice, half pound fine sugar, four eggs. Beat the butter to a cream, add the sugar and the eggs well beaten. Beat all together for twenty minutes, then mix the flour and rice flour and add them; flavour with almond essence or lemon. Bake in a greased and floured tin.

LEBUCHEN.—These are from a German recipe, and should be made and packed away in stone jars a week before using. One pound of pulverized sugar, one pound of flour, one quarter pound of almonds, blanched and sliced, one quarter pound of citron sliced fine, four eggs, two ounces of ground cinnamon, a pinch of ground cloves. Beat the eggs and sugar together very light, then gradually add the flour, to which have been added the spices, almonds and citron. Roll out to one quarter of an inch, cut with round cutters, and bake in a moderate, not slow, oven.

SIMNEL CAKE.—Six ounces butter, three-quarters of a pound of currants, three quarters of a pound of flour, one teaspoonful cinnamon, half pound sultanas, half teaspoonful ginger, quarter pound candied peel, half teaspoonful baking powder, half pound Valencia raisins, a little nutmeg, one teaspoonful mixed spice, four eggs, six ounces sugar, half teacupful milk. Wash and dry the currants and sultana raisins, cut the peel into small square pieces, and stone the raisins. Put the butter and sugar in a basin and beat to a cream. Beat the eggs separately and very well, and add them; then add the flour, baking powder and spices; mix well. Add all the fruit. When all is thoroughly mixed, add the milk if necessary, which depends greatly on the size of the eggs. The mixture should be a paste that can be stirred easily. Grease several folds of paper for the bottom and sides of a cake tin; pour in the mixture, smooth it over the top, sprinkle the top with a little water, dust it over with sugar, cover it with sweetmeats, and bake about one a half hours, protecting it both above and below to prevent it burning.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

As a leaper, the kangaroo is ahead of all. It readily jumps from sixty to seventy feet. A horse has jumped thirty-seven feet, and a man twenty-five feet six and a half inches.

THE common black crow of the island of Barbadoes has from the negroes the designation "the blessing of God," from its declared war against the cockroaches which infest that place.

THE authorities of Finland will not have active members of the Salvation Army in their midst. It has been declared illegal by them for the Salvationists to wear their uniform or make money collections.

THE upper third of the face is altered in expression in affections of the brain, the middle third in diseases of the chest, and the lower third in the diseases of the organs contained in the abdominal cavity.

SUITS of a uniform colour and pattern for soldiers in the British Army date from 1674, when the Foot Guards were clad in grey. The introduction of a regular uniform for sailors dates from 1748, when the "blue jacket" became customary.

THE telephone has lately been arranged for the use of divers. A sheet of copper is used in place of one of the glasses in the helmet, and to this a telephone is fixed, so that the diver, when at the bottom of the sea, has only to slightly turn his head in order to report what he sees, or receive instructions from above.

THE ocean contains several fish which clothe and adorn themselves, the most conspicuous of them being the antennarius, a small fish frequenting the Sargossa Sea, which literally clothes itself with seaweed, fastening the pieces together with sticky, gelatinous strings, and then, as it were, holding the garment on with its fore fins.

SEVERAL European sovereigns are renowned for the length of time which they wear their official clothes. The record in this respect, however, is broken by the rector of the Berlin University, who has just been compelled to order a new official mantle at a cost of £120. The one which he has worn until now was made exactly 192 years ago.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, which is now being furnished with an entirely new drainage system, and being redecorated inside and out at enormous cost, represents, according to an estimate just made by experts, a value of nearly £4,000,000. This does not include the value of the priceless art collections contained within the walls of the palace.

ONE singular property of all animal bodies is that of maintaining within themselves an equable temperature. The blood of the Arctic explorer remains at a normal temperature, though he breathes air that will freeze mercury, and in India, where the temperature of the air is 115 to 120 above zero, the temperature of the blood is still 98 degrees Fahr.

It is a curious fact in connection with Scotland that so recently as the year 1783 there was not such a trade known throughout the country as that of a perfumer. Paris has long been the great centre of this industry, and, though London perfumes are to be bought in every capital in Europe, yet in 1860 there were only forty manufacturing perfumers in London, as against eighty in Paris.

THE Burgomaster of Brussels has ordered the formation of a cyclist corps in connection with the local fire brigade, for the purpose of carrying the first aid to the persons in danger through an outbreak. The men are already being drilled every day, the machines selected being tricycles, upon which they carry a coil of rope, a hatchet and other articles useful in cases of emergency. It is thought by this means help will not only be earlier forthcoming, but the health of the men will be improved, as at present, at the first alarm of fire, some of them are told off to run to the spot, where they arrive hot and perspiring, so that often they catch a bad cold through standing about afterwards in the cold and wet.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. H. K.—Not known to us.  
 B. C.—It is a very difficult matter.  
 ROSE.—Get a prospectus at the school.  
 O. S.—No pensions are drawn in advance.  
 LULU.—It must be a matter of personal feeling.  
 INQUIRER.—No; it is merely an acknowledgment.  
 ONE IN DISTRESS.—Cannot say; consult a chemist.  
 M. R.—You must ask the clergyman of the church.  
 INDIGNATION.—Obtain a copy and submit it to counsel.  
 DORIE.—A trade question. We do not deal with such.  
 A TROUBLED READER.—There is only one remedy—pull them out by the roots as they appear.  
 NORMAN.—Employ a solicitor to make out a deed of gift.  
 A CONSTANT READER.—Such recommendations are never given in our columns.  
 BOB.—The Bank of England is not a Government institution.  
 TROUBLED PARENT.—Yes, the child must attend school.  
 IGNORAMUS.—The postal letters "R.S.O." means "rural sub office."  
 DOUBTFUL ONE.—Inquire when taking a ticket for how long it is available.  
 AN OLD READER.—Toll-gates were generally done away with between 1872 and 1882.  
 LEGALITY.—He cannot claim it at all unless there was an agreement to that effect.  
 L. R.—You must apply to the Secretary of the Education Department, London.  
 LITTLE COOKIE.—A domestic servant is entitled to a month's notice, and must give a month.  
 SOLDIER'S LAMB.—Soldiers leave India in the trooping season—November to March.  
 ROBERTS.—The massacre of Glencoe took place during the reign of William III., February 8, 1692.  
 C. C. R.—Milk applied to boots and shoes once a week will freshen and preserve the leather.  
 VERA.—Plenty of clean, sharp silver sand liberally sprinkled over is a great assistance.  
 EDDIE.—We do not know the rules of the cemetery; sometimes they are most arbitrary.  
 B. S. T.—When quarter day falls on Sunday possession of the house must be given up on the Saturday.  
 ONIL.—Your best course would be to apply for information to the registrar himself.  
 DORIE.—You should practically work under personal teaching for six months at least, we should think.  
 STEWIE.—It might be worth while to take legal opinion on the construction of the society's rules.  
 GHITA.—We should advise you to steep the cage in boiling water. By all means give plenty of sand.  
 B. K.—As there was no agreement the arrangement appears to be terminable by either at any moment.  
 A TWO YEARS' READER.—Such an agreement would not free the husband from the obligation to maintain his wife.  
 GARTHORP.—Army Pension Department, London, is the only place where answer could be given to your question.  
 JOLLY TAR.—Yes. It is quite probable that there are depths in the ocean beyond any we now have knowledge of.  
 ONE IN PERPLEXITY.—If you can prove, in case of dispute, that notice was given to you, a verbal notice is enough.  
 AN APPRECIATIVE READER.—Playing for stakes is illegal on licensed premises, but not on private premises (including a private club).  
 BOOKY.—"Boo" was the *nom de plume* of Charles Dickens, and "Jedediah Cleishbotham" of Sir Walter Scott.  
 EDWIN.—It is not possible to answer your question without knowing more than you tell us—the terms of the hiring, &c.  
 ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Police magistrates can sentence to sixty days for ordinary police offences, and to twelve months under Crimes Prevention Act.  
 W. E.—It is the duty of the headmaster to "interfere between the subordinate teachers and scholars in regard to flogging."  
 IN NEED OF ADVICE.—We cannot advise you to trust yourself in the hands of the man who advertises a cure upon a new and inexplicable method.  
 ERIC.—The line "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," occurs in Gray's "Ode on a distant prospect of Eton College," stanza 10.  
 J. A.—Some discharge from the bow, others from a port on the beam, and several launch their torpedoes from deck into the water.  
 F. F. J.—If you can prove that you took the house as a weekly tenant only a week's notice is necessary, notwithstanding that the rent was paid monthly.

ONE IN A FIX.—Cannot tell how you are to get out of your difficulties, but better to make any sort of terms with your creditors rather than resort to the lenders.

M. R.—We regret that we cannot understand your question. What is "Rubbing bottle?" We never heard of such a curious mixture as the one you mention.

REGULAR READER.—The way to get at the information you desire is to ask the secretary to the assurance company what the present surrender value of your policy is.

INNOCENT ONE.—Jargon, in one sense, means an artificial idiom or dialect; a cant language; in another, a confused unintelligible talk or language; gabble; gibberish.

KING OF CLUBS.—An apprentice cannot be compelled to serve after he is twenty-one, unless he has lost time by his own fault, in which case he can be required to make the time up.

SCOTIE.—The "Flying Scotsman" is the name given specially to the London and Edinburgh express, from King's Cross, Station, London, to Waverley Station, Edinburgh.

NERVOUS.—In purchasing canned goods, it is a safe rule to observe whether the head of the can is concave, a bulging appearance being indicative of decomposition.

I. O. U.—There is no such a thing as imprisonment for debt; if the man can and will not pay he can be imprisoned for contempt of court. If he cannot pay you lose your money.

## THIS YEAR—NEXT YEAR.

THIS year—next year—some time—never—

Gaily did she tell;  
 Rose-leaf after rose-leaf ever  
 Edried round and fell.

THIS year—and she blushed demurely;  
 That would be too soon;  
 He could wait a little, surely,  
 'Tis already June.

Next year—that's almost too hurried,  
 Laughingly said she;  
 For when once a girl is married  
 She no more is free.

Some time—that is vague—long waiting  
 Many a trouble brings;  
 'Twixt delayings and debating,  
 Love might use its wings.

Never—word of evil omen,  
 And she sighed, high ho—  
 'Tis the hardest lot for woman  
 Lone through life to go.

Next year—early in the May-time  
 Was to be the day;  
 Looked she sweetly toward that gay time  
 Gleaming far away.

Never—fair with bridal flowers  
 Came that merry spring;  
 Ere those bright and radiant hours  
 She had taken wing.

CURIOS.—There is no indication given anywhere of Adam's height, but there are sculptures of men made within measurable distance of Adam's date which go to show that men were rather smaller then than now.

PUZZLER.—The nineteenth century or hour began as soon as the eighteenth ended, that was on 31st December, 1890, and that the nineteenth will be complete when the clock strikes 1900; it is running on now.

DAISY BELL.—An acquaintance made with a gentleman in a public ball-room does not entitle him to recognition on her part afterwards. If they meet and she does not bow, he must take it as a refusal to renew the acquaintance.

FASTIDIOUS.—If you have not the means to wear expensive apparel, always endeavour to be neatly dressed. The style of the apparel is often of more importance than its cost, if it be made of material proper to wear on certain occasions.

D. B.—If all you know about them is that one is in "Australia," which consists of six colonies, and the other in "America," a continent so large that this country compares with it like a shilling laid on a one-pound note, your hunt after them is likely to be a long one.

DUVAL.—The only way by which you can obtain admission to the Excise service is by passing a Civil Service examination; if you like to write to the secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., he will give you (gratis) printed information regarding examinations, also dates and places of next competition.

PURCH.—Celery requires a deep, rich, well-drained soil. The seed is sown in a bed, from which the plants are transferred to another when they are two or three inches high. At eight or twelve inches height they are transferred for blanching to trenches which are nearly a foot in depth. The plants are repeatedly earthed up, nearly to the leaves, until they have risen two feet or more above the natural surface.

A FRIEND.—There is no such verdict known to Scotch law as manslaughter; indictment usually contains several "counts," minor and major, "killing" (or homicide, as we say) and "murder"; the man being "not proven" guilty on any of the counts cannot be tried again.

X. Y. Z.—Buy a pennyworth of permanganate of potash at a chemist's, dissolve it in a full teacupful of water, either warm or cold (warm dyes quicker), give your stick repeated coats with that until you get it brown enough to suit you, then coat with copal varnish; let each coat of potash dry before applying another.

DADDY.—Nothing more certain in law than that a man who is found guilty of murder upon evidence by a jury can be hanged, no matter whether he was the sole participant in the crime or only one of three or four; no matter even though he did not strike the fatal blow, if he was standing by consenting or not attempting to prevent it; in that case he was accessory before the fact and guilty of the crime in the eye of the law.

EXILE.—A man who is outlawed is deprived of civil rights merely; he is liable to be apprehended wherever found, he cannot enter into trade, nor sue any one who has defrauded or is indebted to him, but law protects him from personal injury; anyone who assaulted him could be prosecuted precisely as for assault on an individual in full possession of his legal rights, and of course anyone who murdered him would be hanged.

IGNORANT.—If one is staying in the house, and knows that napkin rings are in use, it seems a reflection upon that custom to fling the napkin down in an untidy heap. An elegantly-appointed table deserves better treatment, even at the end of the meal than those distasteful piles of drapery, too. Therefore, it always seems fittest to simply half fold the napkin, and not attract attention to it either by one obtrusive habit or the other.

TOSIAS.—A seal, from the Latin *sigillum*, is a piece of metal, stone, or other hard substance, on which is engraved some image or device, and sometimes a legend or inscription. It is used for making impressions on wax or like material affixed to legal instruments as evidence of their authenticity. The most ancient mode of sealing was that of applying the wax directly to the parchment. From the universal use of seals in England it became the law that no writing was valid or binding until sealed.

QUERIST.—The appointment is in first instance by nomination to Home Secretary through an influential individual, say a member of Parliament; candidates must have been employed for two years underground in a mine; the subjects of examination are handwriting, orthography, arithmetic (including vulgar and decimal fractions), English composition, theoretical and practical acquaintance with coal mines and mining, and a knowledge of metalliferous mines; the examination fee is fixed at £6.

ETIQUETTE.—While one not accustomed to the "rigid rules of etiquette," of which your male friend complains, may be excused from not complying strictly with all of them, he must not imagine that most of them can be put aside without attracting attention. If he aspires at all to move in good society, he must behave with a certain decorum inseparable from that society, and his manners should conform to a certain degree with those who are its acknowledged leaders. Especially is it his duty to say or do nothing offensive to the lady under his protection. Women, as a rule, are keener observers than men, at least in society circles, and any breach of established etiquette on the part of her escort is as mortifying to her as it is annoying to those by whom she is surrounded.

H. L.—Thomas A. Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was born in London, December 21, 1118. In regard to his murder at the altar on December 29, 1170, it is stated in brief, that four barons, hearing Henry II. say in a moment of exasperation, "What an unhappy prince am I, who have not about me one man of spirit enough to rid me of this insolent prelate," resolved on Becket's assassination; and rushing with drawn swords into the cathedral of Canterbury, where he was at vespers, they announced their design, when he cried out, "I charge you in the name of the Almighty, not to hurt any other person here, for none of them have been concerned in the late transactions. The confederates then strove to drag him from the church; but not being able to do so, on account of his resolute deportment, they killed on the spot with repeated wounds, all of which he endured without a groan. The bones of Becket were enshrined in gold and set with jewels in 1229; and were taken up and buried in the reign of Henry VIII. in 1539.

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